

6. IN BAPTISM IS YOUR NEW BIRTH

COMMENTS ON THE LESSON NUMBER SIX

This lesson is designed to show that baptism must be preceded by faith in Jesus and by true repentance before it can be effective.

EXPLANATION OF TERMS

BAPTISM: being immersed in water by someone in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sins.

ETHIOPIA: a nation in Africa, to the south and east of Egypt.

KINGDOM OF GOD: the same as the reign of God. In the present age, it is the church.

NICODEMUS: a leader of the Jews, who became a believer in Jesus.

PHILIP: a brother from the church in Jerusalem, who went To Samaria to tell the people about Jesus Christ. He is also referred to as “Philip the evangelist.”

SAINT: a holy person. In the New Testament the word “saint” refers to all true Christians.

THE SPIRIT: the word “spirit” can have several different

meanings:

1. It can refer to that part of a person, which lives forever.
2. It can refer to the attitude that a person has.
2. It can refer to God (or Christ) when He is present on earth.

IN BAPTISM IS YOUR NEW BIRTH

Have you ever thought that you would like to start life all over again? It is possible, you know. You can have a new birth in this present life. You do not have to wait until after you have died in order to be born again

Immediately after you are baptized, as you come up out of the water, you can start rejoicing (Acts 8:39), for when you come up you will have been raised to a new life (Romans 6:4). Your new life will never end. Your body will die, of course, unless you live until Jesus returns, but your spirit (your inner person) will live forever (John 11:36).

THE CHANGE THAT TAKES PLACE AT BAPTISM

When a person goes down into the water for baptism (immersion), he is a sinner. When he comes out, he is a saint. He may not, at that point, be a perfect saint, yet he has been raised to walk in a new life (Romans 6:4). The change that has come over him is a spiritual rebirth. He has started life all over again. Jesus wants everyone to have the opportunity to start life over again. It is very important that everyone should start life anew, for Jesus said,

“Most assuredly, I say to you,
unless one is born again,
he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

John 3:3

Jesus spoke these words to a man named Nicodemus. This man was puzzled when he heard that he must be born again. He wondered how this is possible. He asked, “How can a man be born when he is old? Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!” To this Jesus replied,

“Most assuredly, I say to you,
unless one is born of water and the Spirit,
he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

John 3:5

Jesus was speaking here of baptism, which has spiritual implications but which takes place in water.

WHERE DOES BAPTISM GET ITS POWER?

Baptism does not get its power from special water of some kind. Baptism is equally effective whether it takes place in a river, a pond, a tank, or wherever. All that is needed is enough water so that a person can be submerged in it. It is not the water that cleanses a person. It is the blood of Jesus, which washes away sins (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14). The reason why a person should be immersed in water is so that he can come into contact with the death of Jesus (Romans 6:3), for it was in Jesus' death that Jesus shed His blood.

Great changes take place when a person is baptized. In baptism he dies to the sinful world around him (Colossians 3:3). It is as if he were crucified with Jesus (Romans 6:6). In baptism a person is buried with Jesus,

and when that person comes up out of the water, he is raised with Jesus (Colossians 2:12). Thus, the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus are all mirrored in baptism (Romans 6:3-4).

From this it can be seen that baptism as portrayed in the New Testament has a certain form to it:

1. There is a going down into water.
2. There is a burial in water.
3. There is a coming up out of the water.

The original form of baptism would not be reflected if a little water were only sprinkled or poured over someone.

The fact, however, that baptism has a form to it does not mean that it is merely form and ceremony. It is more than that. A person could possibly go through the ceremony of baptism without being spiritually regenerated. This is what happens when children are baptized before they know what they are doing.

BAPTISM DOES NOT WORK WITHOUT FAITH

Faith is a prerequisite for baptism. Jesus is the one who established the fact that faith should precede baptism. Jesus said,

“Whoever believes and is baptized
will be saved,
but whoever does not believe

will be condemned.”

Mark 16:16

Did Jesus intend to place faith before baptism, or was it just a coincidence? It was not just a coincidence. Jesus knew exactly what He was doing. For faith gives baptism its effectiveness. Notice what the Apostle Paul wrote:

“Buried with Him in baptism,
in which you also were raised with Him
through faith in the working of God,
who raised Him from the dead.”

Colossians 2:12

In this verse we see that faith in the operation of God makes it possible for a person to be raised to a new life. There is no reason to think that baptism will make a person alive without that person having faith.

It is not the faith of the person that administers baptism, which makes baptism effective; nor is it the faith of the people who witness the baptism. What makes baptism effective is faith on the part of the person that is being baptized. He is the one who must have faith. For that reason, it is useless to baptize little babies. They do not even know what is going on, and therefore, do not have true faith.

WHAT IS TRUE FAITH?

True faith involves at least three things:

1. Trusting in God (Hebrews 11:6).
2. Holding the conviction that certain facts about Jesus are true (Hebrews 11:1).
3. Obeying God's word (Hebrews 11:8).

All three of these things are essential. It is not enough for a person just to trust in God. He must also hold the basic facts about Jesus to be true. Likewise, holding certain facts about Jesus to be true is not enough. A person must do what God said through Jesus.

HOW DOES A PERSON GET FAITH LIKE THIS?

The Bible says that faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). The reason why people need to hear the word of God is so they can believe in Jesus. Jesus sent His disciples into all the world because every person needs to hear the gospel. Jesus said,

“Go therefore
and make disciples of all the nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
teaching them to observe all things
that I have commanded you;
and lo, I am with you always,
even to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:19-20

Notice the order here. First the apostles were to make disciples. That is, they were to start teaching people. Then, only after the apostles had taught people, were they to baptize them. Today it is also necessary to teach people before baptizing them. After baptizing people, the apostles were instructed by Jesus to teach them further. So the order of procedure in the above verses is: (1) Teach all nations, (2) baptize those who have been taught, (3) then teach them some more.

Notice also from the above verses (Matthew 28:19-20) that the baptizing is to be done in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. It is also to be done for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).

REPENTANCE ALSO PLAYS A VITAL ROLE

The apostle Peter preached to the people on the day of Pentecost concerning Jesus, and he accused them of having put Jesus (their Messiah) to death. When the people realized what they had done, they cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Peter responded,

“Repent, and let every one of you
be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ
for the remission of sins;
and you shall receive
the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 2:38

As Peter pointed out in this passage, no person is ready for baptism until he has repented of his sins. It would be a mistake for a person to get baptized if he had no intention of reforming his life.

In view of the fact that both repentance and faith are prerequisites for baptism, no little children should be baptized. They are too young for any sins to be held against them. Also, they do not know enough to grasp the meaning of the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus. So it is better to wait until they are old enough to understand and until they themselves request baptism.

WHAT BAPTISM ACCOMPLISHES

Baptism is washing. It washes away sins (Acts 22:16), and as a result the conscience is cleansed (1 Peter 3:21). When a person comes up out of the water in which He is baptized, he is pure. In the eyes of God, he is just as pure as he was the day he was born.

A person dies to sins when he is baptized, and he becomes alive to righteousness (Romans 8:10). Therefore, he is no longer an enemy of God, for he now tries to please God (Romans 8:7-8). He is able to please God due to the Holy Spirit, which has taken up residence in him (Romans 8:9). He is no longer controlled by fleshly desires, but by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:5).

Baptism does not need to be repeated, unless, of course, the original baptism was flawed in some way. If someone, however, after reading the Scriptures, has no confidence in the way he was baptized and in what he

understood at the time of his baptism, a second baptism would not be out of place (Acts 19:1-5).

BAPTISM IS A COMMAND

Baptism is not something, which the apostles originated. Jesus is the one who has commanded it (Matthew 28:19). By accepting baptism a person shows that he recognizes Jesus' authority and that he submits to Jesus' leadership. Baptism is a public declaration of submission to Jesus. Indeed, "submission" is a key word relative to baptism, for when a person accepts baptism, he acknowledges that he cannot save himself. He acknowledges that he needs help. Baptism is one thing, which a person cannot do for himself. He must have someone to baptize him.

WORKSHEETS

After you have read this lesson and have looked up all the references in the Bible, please read the following sentences. As you read, please pay attention to whether or not the statements are true. If you decide a statement is true, please write a “T” before it. If you decide a statement is false, please write an “F” before it.

- _____1. It is necessary to be born again before anyone can see the kingdom of God.
- _____2. Your new life in Christ begins at baptism.
- _____3. When a person comes up out of the water after baptism his sins are forgiven.
- _____4. Baptism needs to be repeated every now and then.
- _____5. It is important for you to be baptized in some special, sacred water.
- _____6. Baptism is a merely a ceremony.
- _____7. Repentance involves more than just being sorry for the sins one has committed.
- _____8. If you have faith, you do not need to be baptized.
- _____9. Faith comes from hearing the word of God.
- _____10. Jesus does not care whether you are baptized or

not.

Please, complete the following scriptures with the help of the New King James Version of the Bible.

John 3:5

“Jesus answered, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is _____ and _____, he cannot _____ the kingdom of God.’”

Romans 6:4

“Therefore we were _____ with Him through baptism _____, that just as Christ was _____ from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in _____ of life.”

Titus 3:5

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His _____ He saved us, through the _____ of _____ and _____ of the Holy Spirit.”

THOUGHT QUESTIONS: Please, think about the following questions and write a short paragraph about each.

1. Is baptism more than just a ceremonial washing?
Please explain.

2. When a person submits to baptism, does that mean
that he is trying to work his way to heaven?
Please explain.