

WATER BAPTISM

WHY?

by Graham Truscott

“It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” (Matthew 3:15)

“WHY should we be baptized? Because the Lord Jesus commanded it. Because it is the second experience of THE ONLY FOUNDATION the Bible gives upon which we are to build our lives.

So deep is the spiritual meaning of water baptism, whole books could be written about it.

1. BAPTISM AND A CLEAR CONSCIENCE:

“God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal (answer) to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:20,21).

It is a historical and Biblical fact, that because of the sinfulness of mankind, God covered the whole earth with a flood of water, saving only Noah and his family in the ark. The earth was completely covered with water. Here the Bible says the immersing of the candidate in baptism “corresponds to this.”

How does baptism in water “answer to God for a clear conscience”? It means, in effect, that God is asking us if our conscience is clear. The Bible says, “How much more shall the blood of Christ . . . purify your conscience.” (Hebrews 9:14). If your sinful conscience has been washed in the blood of Christ and purified, you no longer feel guilty and ashamed to come into the presence of God. Your conscience is clear. Therefore in baptism you are answering God that your conscience has been purified by the blood of Christ and is now clear. Praise the Lord!

2. BAPTISM IS A TESTIMONY TO THE WORLD OF THE BURIAL AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST:

“Baptized into His death” (Romans 6:3).

Each time someone is baptized in the Biblical way, they are testifying to the world that God’s son, Jesus Christ, was crucified on the cross, and shed His blood and died for their sins. His dead body was placed in the grave. But He did not stay there. After three days He rose from the tomb, victorious over sin and death. Each time a believer is baptized, confessing faith in Him, public testimony is given to this glorious fact:

“We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

3. BAPTISM IS AN EXPERIENCE OF BURYING THE “OLD SINFUL MAN”:

It has often been said that “Baptism is an outward testimony of an inward experience.” It is. But it is much more than this! Baptism has an inward significance too! From a study of Romans, chapter 6 and Colossians, chapter 2, we see that there is a deep and precious identification of the believer with the Lord Jesus in His death, burial, and resurrection, when water baptism takes place:

“We know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For he who has died is freed from sin. For sin shall have no dominion over you” (Romans 6:6,7,14).

“Buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, Who raised Him from the dead” (Colossians 2:12).

What tongue can tell the blessed deliverance we have in the Cross of Christ! Freed from struggling! Freed from sin! Freed from condemnation, guilt and fear. Sin nailed to the Cross. The old man buried.

We ourselves risen in newness of life. This is the inward experience of those who follow their Lord through the waters of baptism.

4. BAPTISM AND SATAN’S DEFEAT:

”Buried with Him in baptism . . . He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in Him” (Colossians 2:12,15).

In Biblical water baptism, the believer is laying a good and firm foundation! He testifies before Satan, the enemy of God and man, together with all his devils, that the Lord Jesus has triumphed over them all in His Cross, and has delivered the believer from their kingdom and powers. Hallelujah!

5. BAPTISM IS A PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF REPENTANCE AND FAITH IN CHRIST:

“Everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before My Father Who is in Heaven; but whoever denies Me before men, I also will deny before My Father Who is in Heaven” (Matthew 10:32,33).

The first way a new believer acknowledges his new-found faith in Christ is by being publicly baptized in water. Baptism was no secret thing; but an open, bold testimony before others. And how this public acknowledgement and testimony strengthens our faith and determination to follow Christ! The Lord does not want secret, weak, fearful disciples, and this is the reason why He has commanded believers to “Be baptized” – to acknowledge Him before men.

6. BAPTISM IS A TESTIMONY TO THE ONENESS OF TRUE BELIEVERS IN CHRIST:

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:27,28).

By being baptized, the believer testifies that he or she is equal and one with all other believers in Christ. By the shedding of His blood on the Cross, the Lord Jesus has made all believers in Him “one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us” (Ephesians 2:14 – KJV). In Jesus Christ there is no Jewish Christian, English Christian, African Christian, Indian Christian, no rich or poor Christians, no educated or uneducated Christians, no servants or masters, no black or white, no male or female, no denomination or mission – “for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

So the believer by being baptized acknowledges this equality and oneness in Christ with all other Christians in the world who have trusted in Christ and been baptized in the Bible way. Any baptized believer still holding in his or her mind any kind of class consciousness, racial prejudice, denominational feeling, or attitude of superiority over other Christians, is living contrary to the truth and testimony of baptism, and needs to repent and be cleansed afresh in the blood of Christ.

7. BAPTISM AND THE PURPOSE OF GOD:

”But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him” (Luke 7:30).

Although this verse is speaking of baptism by John the Baptist, the spiritual lesson here and in believer’s baptism in the name of Jesus Christ are the same. We acknowledge in water baptism our willingness to accept God’s purpose for our lives. God has a purpose -a plan – for each one of us. But if we will not obey His command to “Be baptized” we reject His purpose for us, and God’s purposes are best!

8. BAPTISM AND SEPARATION FROM THE OLD LIFE:

“I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Corinthians 10:1, 2).

The only other Old Testament incident given to us as a picture of water baptism is the baptism of the Israelites in the Red Sea. Actually, while the level of the water was well above their heads, and the water was “a wall to them on their right hand and on their left, . . . the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea” (Exodus 14:29).

They had been saved from the judgement of God through the blood of the lamb on their doors. They were set free from bondage and slavery to the Egyptians. But their “baptism into Moses” meant full and final separation from Egypt, Pharaoh King of Egypt, and the Egyptians. Pharaoh and the Egyptian chariots and horsemen were thrown into the sea, and destroyed under the waters which God brought upon them (Exodus 15:19,21).

In the same way, believers who have followed their Lord through the waters of baptism, and even those intending to be baptized, should live lives of complete separation from bad habits, and the vain ways of the world.

9. BAPTISM FULFILLS ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS:

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him. John would have prevented Him, saying ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’ But Jesus answered him ‘Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. ‘Then he consented. And . . . Jesus was baptized” (Matthew 3:13-16).

If the sinless, spotless Son of God, the Lord Jesus, had to be baptized to fulfill all righteousness, then who are we to say we do not need to be baptized in water as He was? Believers show in their baptism they are willing to fulfill all righteousness like their Lord.

10. BAPTISM AND REJOICING:

“And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:38, 39).

“He was baptized at once, with all his family . . . and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God” (Acts 16:33, 34).

The eunuch returned to Ethiopia rejoicing, and planted the seeds of the Church of Jesus Christ there, the results of which are still evident today, nearly 2,000 years later. The joy of salvation and baptism so filled the jailer’s heart, he rejoiced with all his household.

Today many seek for joy in ways that are not pleasing to God. There is no lasting joy apart from God. “Thou dost show me the path of life; in Thy presence there is fullness of joy” (Psalm 16:11). As you follow His path, which leads to baptism, you too will be rejoicing. For there is a direct connection in the Bible between water baptism and joy. A deep, spiritual, lasting joy as a result of obeying God.

Many more reasons why we should be baptized could be listed. But these are sufficient to show the emphasis God has placed on baptism.

BAPTISM – GOD’S COMMAND

“WHY should we be baptized?” Because of the glorious testimony and blessed experience of water baptism. Because it is an essential step in God’s plan for THE ONLY FOUNDATION for our lives. Above all, God has commanded us to be baptized in the Bible way. Even if we do not understand all the reasons and spiritual meanings of water baptism, this one fact should compel us to obey the Lord: it is His command. He said:

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me: and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him” (John 14:21).

The real proof of our love for Christ is not our words, not all the many things we do for Him, not our prayers, not our Bible reading, not our going to church, although all these things have their place. The real proof is this – do we keep His commandments? “I hasten and do not delay to keep Thy commandments” (Psalm 119:60). Are you hastening to keep His commandment to “Be baptized every one of you”? God’s Word says:

“He commanded them to be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:48).