

Baptism

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[0 : 00] Apostles, chapter 2, beginning at verse 37. Acts 2, verse 37.

Now, when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?

And Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are afar off, for everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him. And he testified with many other words and exalted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation.

So those who received his word were baptized, and they were added that day about 3,000 souls.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

[1 : 26] Amen. We'll sing again before we consider what God has to say this morning. Thank you. So what's it all about? It's about a new beginning.

That is what God offers us in the gospel. And in this chapter, it's about the beginning of the Christian church. It's about the beginning of new life.

It's about the beginning of the event that took place somewhere about A.D. 30. And in terms of current history, Jesus had died on the cross some 50 days earlier.

The congregation had listened. And what Peter had been talking about, amongst other things, was the resurrection of Jesus. What he had to say, they asked the question, What shall we do?

Let me think of the origin of this teaching. They were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?

[2 : 36] I've baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is a fact.

You won't find any teaching given by Jesus. You have his example. He identified himself with us when he was baptized by John the Baptist.

But what he does give, In Matthew we read that Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make the disciples of all them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded. And behold, I am with you always to the close of the age.

Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved. He who does not believe will be condemned.

[3 : 43] If we go to the Old Testament, You will find in the Old Testament there are many experiences whereby people had to be ceremonially and ritually washed.

The epistle to the Hebrews, When he's talking about the death of Jesus, Actually comments on them, According to this arrangement, Gifts and sacrifices are offered, Which cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, But deal only with food and drink and various ablutions, Regulations for the body, Imposed until the time of reformation.

And what's being described there is ritual washings. Now this practice of ritual washings, Washing a body, Washing plates and cups and so on, Which Jesus actually testified to, The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands, Observing the tradition of their elders, And there are many others that they observe, The washing of cups and pots and vessels of bronze and beds. Now this goes on in Judaism to this day. And here's a story that illustrates it. The shop known as Next, You might patronize it.

My daughter-in-law certainly does. We give her vouchers every year and off she goes. Well it was originally owned by a Jewish couple who lived in Yorkshire.

[5 : 18] And once a year, Their chartered accountant arrived to do the books. And he would stay for the weekend. He was a Church of England vicar. And one day he got up early, And had toast.

And washed it, The plate afterwards. But the problem was, He used the wrong sink. And there's no ritual for the cleansing of a defiled plate.

So it had to be thrown out. So this is the idea that's there in Judaism, In the time of Jesus, And now, All those who wish to join the congregation of Israel, That we read of in the Acts of the Apostles, Had to go under some kind of baptism.

Between the time of the Old Testament finishing, And the New Testament beginning, There was a community that met in the Judean desert, Where the Dead Sea Scrolls were written.

You can go there today, You can see the site. And one of the things you can see in the site, Is a pool where people were ritually immersed, And baptized.

[6 : 32] And coming closer to the time of the New Testament, You have the ministry of John the Baptist. He preached saying, After me comes one who is mightier than I, The thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and loose.

I have baptized you with water, But he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. So all these things, The washings in Judaism, The pool out there in the Judean desert, Where the Dead Sea Scrolls were written, The ministry of John the Baptist, Are all leading up To the introduction of Christian baptism. Secondly, the meaning. Here we go to Paul's letter to the Romans, In chapter 6, And he says this, Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus, Were baptized into his death?

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, However, we too might walk in newness of life.

Now in the epistle to the Romans, The apostle is talking about salvation by faith. He calls it justification. Since we are justified by faith, Since we are saved by faith, We are peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[8 : 07] But in chapter 6, He's talking about something else. And that something else is freedom from sin.

And how many people there are in today's world That are bogged down with one addiction or another, And they are looking for freedom.

They can have it in Christ. So at the beginning of the chapter, He says, What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace make abound?

By no means. How can we who die to sin still live in it? In these verses I read, First of all, He's talking about the death And the resurrection of Christ.

But he applies it to us And to the ordinance of baptism. We were buried 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.

[9 : 19] It's got something to say About what baptism actually means. The gospels relate The death of Jesus On the cross.

And the apostle in writing to the Romans Is relating that truth To the life of every believer. He says that as Christ literally died and rose again, So the Christian must also die And rise again.

And that's what's happened here. Ishmael's made a statement. The past life is forgotten.

It's turned away from. She's heading in a new direction. If we have been united with him In a death like his, We shall certainly be united In a resurrection like his.

In other words, Under the old saying, Which is true, That what baptism is, Is an outward sign Of an inward grace.

[10 : 34] And without that meaning, This sacrament that we've celebrated today Wouldn't have the meaning That it's meant to have. The call of Christ To us all comes right through it.

Jesus said this, If any person would come after me, Let them deny him themselves And take up their cross and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, And whoever loses his life for my sake Will save it. An outward sign of something wonderful That has taken place.

The call to a new life In God. Jesus said, The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

I have come, I have come, That they may have life, And they may have it abundantly. So what does Jesus say to us today?

[11 : 46] He says this, Come to me, All who labor, And are heavy laden, And I will give you rest.

Would God that everybody would take note of what he says. Let's think finally about the application of all this. Repent and be baptized, Every one of you, In the name of Jesus Christ, For the forgiveness of your sins, And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

So what he's saying here is, That the listeners should repent. They should undergo this sacrament of baptism, For the forgiveness of sins, As a result being, That they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The first command is the word, Repent. And the meaning is, That the listeners are not only to be sorry, For what they've done, But should face, A new direction in their lives.

That's what it means. To repent means to have, A change of heart. To turn from your former ways. To change your ways.

[13 : 07] Now let's be clear, The people who were listening to Peter, Were the same people, Who stood at the cross, And shouted out, Crucify him.

And Peter makes that clear, In the following statement, In the sermon he says, Let all the house of Israel, Therefore know assuredly, That God has made him, Both Lord and Christ, This Jesus, Whom you, Crucified.

So the word is being pressed home. You did this. But now it's not only a case of blame, It's a case of change.

It's a new life. A new beginning. Of course, We weren't there, When Jesus was crucified on the cross.

But in another sense, We were. Because it was our rebellion against God, That took him there in the first place. They are to repent, And face a new direction, In their lives.

[14 : 25] Then he tells them, Be baptized, Every one of you, And adds, For the forgiveness, Of your sins.

So repentance is something you express, Through the sacrament of baptism, An outward sign to all concerned, Of this inward grace, Of forgiveness.

That's what he says. But baptism also, Has to be administered, As it was today, In the name of Jesus Christ, For the forgiveness of sins.

Why? Because only Jesus, Can forgive your sin, And give you, Peace of mind.

Mark 2, He tells the people, You may know, The Son of Man, Has authority on earth, To forgive sins.

[15 : 29] So when we celebrate, As this bill has today, This baptism, In the name of Jesus Christ, It is, This that we are talking about, This inward grace, Of forgiveness.

But it's also, A statement, Of commitment. A total commitment, To Jesus Christ, As Lord, And Savior.

Here is a day, In the life of the early church, In the life of the believers, In the life of Ishmael, Which will be remembered.

A public demonstration, Of this inward grace, This gospel, You have to take it, For yourselves.

Here is a story, Which I witnessed, Many years ago. One of the previous ministers, Of this church, Alec Hardy, Was taking a service, In Charlotte Chapel.

[16 : 38] And for his children's address, He held up, A box, Of good news chocolate. And he said, I'm coming down the stairs, And I'll give it, To any boy or girl, That comes forward.

And so he stood, At the bottom of the stairs, It seemed to be an eternity. And then this little boy, At the back, Went forward, And took the box.

And Alec said, You see that? That's what the gospel is like. You take it, For yourself. We're going to sing, Just as I am, Without one plea.

That's what the gospel is like. Thank you. Thank you.