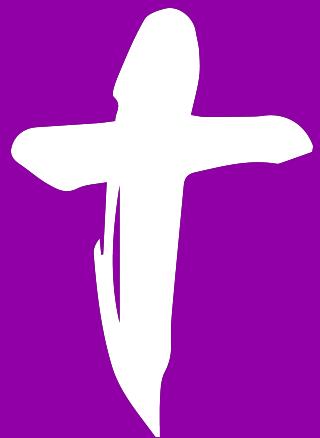


FOUNDATIONS



Foundations

Contents

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Lesson One | Introduction |
| Lesson Two | Repentance from acts that lead to death |
| Lesson Three | Faith in God |
| Lesson Four | The laying on of hands |
| Lesson Five | Baptism in water |
| Lesson Six | Baptism in the Holy Spirit |
| Lesson Seven | The resurrection of the dead |
| Lesson Eight | Eternal judgement |

FOUNDATIONS

LESSON ONE

Introduction

Grasping the essentials

Hebrews 6: 1-2 gives the details of the elementary teachings about Christ. It is vital that we grasp these teachings because not to do so will impair our development.

“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundations of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instructions about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgement”.

In the previous chapter the writer of the epistle introduces the problem that beset the Hebrew Christians and which of course still remains a problem in Christianity today.

Hebrews 5: 11-14. ***“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact though by this time you ought to be teachers you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil”.***

Three problems are highlighted:

- 1) They had not developed and were acting as infants. The time had come when they should have been full grown Christians but instead of that they were living as if they had just been born again.
- 2) When they should have been having solid food, they needed milk. Milk equates to ‘elementary truths’.
- 3) They had never understood the elementary truths and therefore still needed teaching when they should have had the ability to teach others.

So the failure of Christians to grow or mature is displayed in the analogy of infants and growth.

A change in the analogy

In the sixth chapter the subject remains the same. The analogy has changed but the same problem is being portrayed. Instead of talking of infants and growth the illustration is now foundations that become buildings. Note again the use of the term ‘elementary teachings’ in 6:1. So again as the subject of growth is pursued we are being directed again to our start this time not as infants but foundations.

Let us remember that failure to grow presented in chapter 5 shows that Christians are still infants and have need of milk because they have never understood the elementary truths. Now as in chapter 6 we are told to ‘go on to maturity’ we have to face the fact that we can never do that, i.e. grow up, until we have fully understood the ‘elementary teachings’ i.e. the foundational truths of our faith.

These elementary truths are the factors that govern our entrance into salvation. Unless we have a right grasp of the reality of salvation, i.e. unless our initiation is right. We will never be right but continually act as immature infants.

Paul uses the same analogy in 1 Corinthians 3: 1-2

“Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly - mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready”.

Here we see the traits manifest in immature Christians.

1) Jealousy 1 Corinthians 3:3

“You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men”?

A desire to have for ourselves what others have.

2) Quarrelling 1 Corinthians 3:3

“You are still worldly. For since there is quarrelling

Strife, contention or the expression of enmity.

Christians display such feelings because they have not grown up - they have failed to grasp the meaning of salvation.

3) Party spirit 1 Corinthians 3:4

“For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere men”?

All are only servants who Christ saved and assigned to each his task. When we exalt one above the other we are dividing Christ. We should not let our appreciation for any teacher, preacher or author lead us into intellectual pride. Our allegiance must be to Christ and too the unity he desires.

4) Lack of discernment Hebrews 5:14

“But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil”.

The constant practice of God's word in our lives will transform our spiritual understanding of what God requires.

Conclusion: As we recognise the “give away” traits of infant Christian behaviour in our lives it is a sign we need to get into God's word until our whole demeanour changes.

FOUNDATIONS

LESSON TWO

Repentance from acts that lead to death

Repentance - to change one's mind

In the New Testament the English verb “to repent” is normally used to translate the Greek verb “metanoein”. Its basic meaning is always the same “to change one’s mind”. Thus repentance is not an emotion but a decision.

Many people associate repentance with emotion - with the shedding of tears and so on. It is possible, however, for a person to feel great emotion and to shed many tears and yet never repent in a scriptural sense.

True repentance is an inner change of mind resulting in an outward turning back, or turning around, to face and to move in a completely new direction.

The sincere first response to God

The perfect example of true repentance defined in this way, is found in the parable of the prodigal son - (Luke 15: 1-32). Here we read how the prodigal turned his back on his father and home and went off into a distant land, there he wasted all he had on a sinful life. Eventually he came to himself, hungry and lonely. At this point he made a decision. He said, Luke 15:18 ***“I will set out and go back to my father.”***

He immediately carried out his decision and went back to his father. This is true repentance: first the inward decision, then the outward act of that decision - the act of turning back to his father and home.

Every man in his unregenerate, sinful condition has to turn back to God, his Father and heaven his home. Every step he takes away from God is a step nearer a lost eternity. He must stop, change his mind, change his direction, face the opposite way and walk towards God.

This first essential act is called repentance. It is the first move any sinner must take who desires to be reconciled with God.

Distinguished from remorse

In some passages of some translations the word “repent” is used in a different sense. An example of this is Matthew 27:3 AV - ***“Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver...”***. In the NIV it reads like this: ***“When Judas, who had betrayed him saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse ..”***

The word translated ‘repent’ should be translated remorse or anguish. There is no doubt that at this moment Judas experienced intense anguish and remorse. Nevertheless he did not experience true, scriptural repentance, he did not change his mind, his course, his direction. On the contrary, the very next verse says he went and hanged himself.

The truth is that he could not change his course; he had already gone too far. In spite of the Saviour’s warnings, he had deliberately committed himself to a course from which there could be no return. He had passed “the place of repentance”.

It is possible for a man, by wilful stubbornness to come to a place of no turning back - a place where the door of repentance has been closed behind him.

Esau’s error

Another man who made this same tragic error was Esau, who for a bowl of stew sold his birthright.

Hebrews 12:17. “Afterwards, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears”.

In a foolish, careless moment Esau sold his birthright to his brother in exchange for a bowl of stew. Genesis tells us that Esau “despised his birthright”. In despising his birthright, he despised the blessings and promises of God that were associated with the birthright. Later Esau regretted what he had done. He sought to regain the blessings, but he was rejected. Why? He found no place of repentance.

Here’s further evidence that strong emotion is not necessarily proof of repentance.

The only way to true faith

True repentance must always go before true faith.

The call to repentance begins at the very introduction of the New Testament with the ministry of John the Baptist.

Mark 1: 3-4 - “a voice of one calling in the desert, “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight paths for him.” And so John came, baptising in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”.

John’s call to repentance was a necessary preparation for the revelation of the Messiah of Israel. Until Israel had been called back to God in repentance, their long-awaited Messiah could not be revealed among them.

Mark 1: 14-15 - “After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come, “he said. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

The first commandment of Jesus was not believe but repent. First repent then believe.

After his death and resurrection when Christ commissioned his apostle to go to all the nations, the first word of his message was “repentance”.

Luke 24: 46-47 - *“He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem”.*

Here again it's repentance first, and after that, forgiveness of sins.

Shortly after the resurrection, the apostles, through the spokesman Peter, began to fulfil the commission of Christ. Preaching on the Day of Pentecost the crowd listening asked *“Brothers what shall we do?”*

Acts 2: 38 - *“Peter replied. “Repent and be baptised, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins”.*

When Paul spoke to the elders of the church at Ephesus, he outlined the gospel message which he had preached to them.

Acts 20:21 - *“I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus”.*

Paul's message is the same: first repentance, then faith.

Finally, as we have already seen in Hebrews 6: 1-2, the order of the basic foundation doctrines of the Christian faith is first repentance from dead works, then faith, baptisms and so on.

True repentance must precede true faith. Without such repentance, faith alone is an empty profession.

Over simplification of the gospel

The simplification of the gospel can be taken too far. The message “Only believe”, is not the message of Christ. Christ and his apostles preached “Repent and believe.” Leaving out the call to repentance is misleading and misrepresenting God.

Paul tells us in Acts 17:30 - *“In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent”.*

Repentance from acts that lead to death

In Hebrews 6:1 repentance is defied as *“repentance from acts that lead to death”* or repentance from *“dead works”*.

The phrase “dead works” includes all acts and activities that are not based upon repentance and faith. It includes even the activities of religion, charity, prayers, church attendance, every kind of religious rite and ordinance if they are not based on repentance and faith are ‘dead works’.

True repentance begins with God

True repentance begins with God and not with man. It originates in the free and sovereign grace of God. Apart from the working of God’s grace and the moving of God’s Spirit, man left to himself is incapable of repentance.

John 6:44 - ***“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him”.***

In this age of God’s grace he is drawing all to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9 - ***“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance”.***

Accepting the Spirit’s drawing leads to saving faith and eternal life, rejected, it leaves the sinner to continue on his way to the grave and eternity apart from God. Without such repentance, Christ himself said: Luke13:3. ***“But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”***

FOUNDATIONS

LESSON THREE

Faith in God

Faith that saves us

Salvation is by faith alone.

Is your faith true biblical faith, valid faith? If it is not, your whole standing before Christ is in question.

Christ died for the sins of every person in the world but only those who exercise true biblical faith in God will be saved.

Avoiding the wrong foundation

Let's take a little time to make sure that our faith is based on a biblical foundation. To help us understand what that is we will look at a number of incorrect foundations.

1) Miracles

Again and again Jesus told the people not to talk of the miracles that had taken place. Was this because he did not want people to found their faith upon miracles?

There were many who followed Jesus because of the miracles he did, but in the end called for his death. Faith that is founded on miracles will not stand.

2) Men

In Matthew 17: 14-23 we read the account of the healing of a boy with demons. The father of the boy has brought his son to the disciples for them to heal him. ***"I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him."***

Here the man's faith is obviously misplaced. It was in men. Jesus then rebukes not only this man but his generation. ***"Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."***

They had failed to grasp who Jesus was and were still looking to men rather than to God.

3) The Church

We must be careful when witnessing or sharing our faith we do not evangelise our church but Jesus Christ.

If we emphasise the church rather than Christ on which the church is founded we might easily mislead people. John 12:32 ***"But I, "when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."***

Believing only on Jesus

In Acts chapter 16, we read the account of Paul and Silas on their third missionary journey to Philippi in Macedonia. Their actions led to their imprisonment. During the night a violent earthquake shakes the foundations of the prison. All the doors fly open and the prisoners chains come loose. The jailer in fear of his life draws his sword and is about to kill himself when Paul orders him not too. The jailer then asks Paul "**HOW CAN I SAVE MYSELF what can I DO?**"

Paul's response is "**YOU CAN DO NOTHING YOU CANNOT SAVE YOURSELF**". All you can do is put your faith and trust in Jesus.

I'm not convinced he was crying out for redemptive salvation as in the case when Peter preached in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. But on reflection Paul's answer was perfect. There was no natural solution to this man's problem it needed God's intervention.

The story goes on to describe how Paul and Silas share the gospel of salvation with this man and his family and they were all born again of the Spirit of God.

Salvation does not come to us through what we do but by what we believe.

Invalid faith

There is genuine true biblical faith but there is also 'vain' faith.

That word means: invalid, useless, fruitless and worthless.

2 Corinthians 6:1 "As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain".

The first warning here is the hearers might be giving mental ascent to what is being said, even enjoy what they are hearing but they are not receiving the message by faith letting it affect their hearts, allowing the Holy Spirit to enter their lives, they are not receiving God's salvation.

The second warning is - it is not good enough to believe what is convenient, get baptised as a religious ritual and attend church thinking all is well, only to discover you were never born again of God's Holy Spirit.

Contrasting conversions

In Acts Chapter 8 Scripture presents to us two characters who are confronted with the claims of the Gospel, Simon the Sorcerer and the Ethiopian.

Simon's conversion experience comes into question. Was he only impressed by Philip's miraculous signs of healing and deliverance and he wanted some of that power. And later Peter and John's demonstration of Holy Spirit power when they prayed for people to be filled with the Spirit.

In response to Simon's offer to purchase this kind of anointing Peter's rebuke of him is very severe.

Acts 8: 20-23 - "*Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin".*

Compare Simon's experience with the Ethiopians. Acts 8: 26-40 - He is searching for the truth, "*How can I understand unless someone explains it to me?" "Tell me please".* Philip carefully explains to him the good news about Jesus. He immediately baptises him and the Scripture goes on to say the Ethiopian went on his way rejoicing.

The question of Simon's conversion is debatable. What we can learn from these two examples is we do not want our conversion experience to be a matter of debate.

What then must we believe to ensure our faith is genuine biblical saving faith.

1) Do you believe that Jesus is God? The only born Son of God?

John 8:24. - "*I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am (the one I claim to be) you will indeed die in your sins."*

Jesus was not simply a good man or a prophet. He is the one and only Son of God. We are his adopted children. Jesus is in essence God.

2) Do you believe the actual physical body of Jesus rose from the dead?

1 Corinthians 15:17 - "*And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins".*

Jesus paid for our sins with his physical death. To show the world that his death fully justified us God raised his body from the dead to prove it to us.

3) Do you know that the truth is in your heart and not only in your head?

James 2:19 - "*You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that - and shudder".*

Knowing the facts about the life and death of Jesus is not believing faith. Faith in the heart changes a person's whole life. Faith in the head does not.

4) Has the fruit of your life changed since you believed in Jesus. Is love the value that now rules your life, the love of God first and then others?

John the Baptist speaking of the Pharisees:

Luke 3: 7-8 - “***You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance***”.

The Pharisees believed in God with their heads but their hearts were far from him.

5) Has the direction of your life changed since you believed in Jesus?

James 2:20 - “***You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless***”.

The new direction of your life is living proof to you that your faith is genuine.

I have not said these things to frighten you or make you feel unsure. On the contrary I have said all these things to assure you.

Faith in God is a vital foundation if we are going to build a strong and stable Christian life “going on to maturity.”

FOUNDATIONS

LESSON FOUR

The Laying on of Hands

In our examination of the six elementary teachings we are reminded that they are the elementary teachings about Christ. Our faith is built on Christ himself, his teaching and his practice. Through repentance and faith we embarked on this Christian life. In the baptisms we are immersed deeper into God to emerge with an anointing to impart the blessings of God to others. It is through the laying on of hands that Scripture direct us to do this.

I have rearranged the biblical order of these teachings to accommodate the teaching programme so we will look at the ‘laying on of hands’ before I teach on baptisms.

“They will place their hands on”

Prior to his baptism Jesus had not performed any supernatural acts empowered by the Holy Spirit. When he came out of the Jordan the Holy Spirit came upon him and remained on him. John 3:34 tells us that God’s Spirit was upon Jesus without limit or measure. From this moment on as he laid hands on people touching them in faith Holy Spirit power would flow from him to them.

Some example of the laying on of hands

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Matthew 8:3 | <i>“Jesus reached out and touched the manimmediately he was cured of his leprosy”.</i> |
| Matthew 8:15 | <i>“He touched her hand and the fever left her.”</i> |
| Matthew 9:25 | <i>“He went in and took the girl by the hand and she got up.”</i> |
| Matthew 14:31 | <i>“Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him”You of little faith why did you doubt?”</i> |
| Matthew 19:13 | <i>“The little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them.” (Here he prays a blessing over them).</i> |
| Mark 6:2 AV | <i>“and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands.”</i> |
| Mark 6:5 | <i>“He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them”.</i> |

Mark 7: 32-33,35 *"Then some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on the man. After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. At this the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosed and he began to speak plainly."*

Mark 8: 23-25 *"He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened."*

What was happening as he touched them? The anointing of the Holy Spirit that was upon him the reservoir of the Holy Spirit that was within him flowed from him into the lives of the needy, lepers, those with fevers, the dead, the drowning, little children, those needing miracles, the sick, the deaf and the blind. There is no indication he ever prayed to his Father to heal the sick but simply laid his hands upon them.

In Mark 16: 17-18 Jesus speaking to the eleven said *"And these signs will accompany those who believe They will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well".*

Similarly in Matthew 10: 7-8 Jesus said *"As you go, preach the message: The kingdom of heaven is near (then demonstrate it) heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."*

As the Holy Spirit has freely been poured into your life let it freely pour out to heal, cleanse and deliver those around you.

Just as repentance, faith, baptisms, resurrection and judgement are living realities in our lives so also must be the laying on of hands.

Streams of living water

John 7: 37-39. - *"On the last and great day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believe in him were later to receive."*

Jesus said that when he returned to his Father he would ask him to pour the Holy Spirit out upon the church and all those who were thirsty should come to him and he would fill them with the Spirit. The infilling of the Holy Spirit was not only for personal blessing of those that came and drank but they were to act as channels so the Spirit could flow through them touching the lives of those in need, in the same way Jesus touched the lives of those who came to him.

Don't discount yourself

We have already said that “these signs will accompany those who believe” but too many Christians discount themselves saying “this sort of thing is not for me it is for special people like apostles or prophets or elders. NO these signs follow those who “believe”.

Paul receives his anointing

In Acts Chapter 9 we read the account of Saul’s conversion and baptisms.

Saul, a strict Pharisee, is travelling to Damascus to seek out Jews who have converted to Christ. With authority from the High Priest he will take them as prisoners back to Jerusalem. Nearing his destination a light from heaven suddenly flashes around him. He falls from his horse, he is blinded and Christ confronts him revealing himself to be the Lord. His travelling companions escort him to Damascus where he waits on God - blind and not eating or drinking. In Damascus there is a disciple named Ananias. He is not an apostle, prophet or pastor he is described simply as a disciple. The Lord speaks to him in a vision instructing him to go to the house where Saul is staying and there to place his hands on him to restore his sight.

This is how the Scriptures describe the event:

Acts 9: 17-19 - ***“Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord-Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here - has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptised, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.”***

May I highlight two things we see in the account of the event. (1). There is no record of Ananias praying for Saul. He was instructed to lay his hands on Saul and this is what he did. When we lay hands on people to impart a blessing it seems natural to pray but is it really necessary?

(2) Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit. I think it is reasonable to assume that it was through the laying on of hands by Ananias that Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit.

The transfer of the Spirit

Saul’s conversion experience shows us that through the laying on of hands it is not only healings and blessings that are transferred but also the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Later in Saul’s ministry, now called Paul, we read about him doing the very same thing.

Acts 19:6. - ***“When Paul placed his hands on them the Holy Spirit came on them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied”.***

The reservoir of the Holy Spirit that flowed into Saul through the initial laying on of hands by Ananias, Paul continued to replenish, through the Holy Spirit, and now it was flowing out of him into others filling them with the Holy Spirit and releasing them in the gifts of prophecy.

As disciples of Jesus we simply follow his lead

As followers of Jesus, just like the disciples, we follow the lead of our Rabbi Jesus. He laid hands on the sick people rebuking sickness and disease so should we. As people touched his clothing in faith virtue flowed from him to heal the sick.

We know that in the apostle Paul's experience handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick and their illnesses were cured and evil spirits left them.

In Peter's experience the sick were brought into the streets and laid on beds so that as his shadow passed over them they were healed.

Commissioning ministers

In addition to healing, imparting the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts, the laying on of hands was practised when apostles were sent out from the local church to engage in mission work.

Acts 13:3. - ***"So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off."***

And in the appointing of deacons and elders in a local church.

Acts 6: 5-6 ***"They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them."***

In conclusion

Laying on of hands is directly connected with the ministry of healing; with the equipping of believers for active service through the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and with the commissioning of specially called Christian workers. It also strengthens the life of the local church in two ways, spiritually through the impartation of spiritual gifts, and particularly, through the appointment of deacons and elders.

For all these reasons, the ordinance of laying on of hands logically takes its place among the great foundational doctrines of the Christian faith.

FOUNDATIONS

LESSON FIVE

Baptism in water

Baptisms

The third foundational doctrine of the Christian faith listed in Hebrews 6:2 is baptisms. Before we look at the various New Testament types of baptisms we must establish what the word “to baptise” means. The Greek word ‘bapto’, from which we get our English word baptise, means “to cause something to be dipped into a fluid and then taken out again.”

Biblical examples of immersion

There are a number of Scriptures that illustrate for us the practice of New Testament baptism being total immersion of the candidate in water.

The Ethiopian eunuch. Acts 8: 38-39 *“And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptised him. When they came up out of the water...”*. If it was sufficient to sprinkle the Ethiopian with water it was not necessary for them both to go into the water.

John baptising at Aenon near Salim. *John 3:23 “Now John was baptising at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water,”* Plenty of water would not be required to sprinkle but necessary for immersion.

Baptism is likened to burial. Romans 6: 4-5. *“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into deathIf we have been united with him like this in his death, we will also be united with him in his resurrection”*. In this figurative language just as we are immersed in the ground in our physical death we are immersed in water at our spiritual death and resurrection.

Four different baptisms

- 1) John’s baptism of repentance Mark 1:4. *“And so John came, baptising in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”*.
- 2) The baptism of suffering Luke 12:50. *“But I have a baptism to undergo and how distressed I am until it is completed!”* Also referred to in Mark 10:38. *“You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with?”* Then he goes on to say *“You will drink the cup I drink and be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with.”*

Jesus here refers to the spiritual and physical surrender that lay ahead of him as he went to the cross.

- 3) Christian baptism in water Matthew 28:19. *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”*.

4) The baptism in the Holy Spirit Acts 1:5. "***For John baptised with water but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.***" The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a supernatural investment of power from God to witness for Christ.

Of all the four types of baptisms listed - the baptism of suffering - belongs to a more advanced level of spiritual experience that does not come within the scope of this series of studies. For this reason we shall say nothing more. We shall confine our attention to the other three.

John's baptism of repentance and confession

John's message and ministry served two special purposes: (1) They prepared the hearts of the people of Israel of the coming of the long-awaited Messiah, Jesus Christ. (2) They provided a link between the dispensation of the law and the prophets, which was closed by John's ministry, and the dispensation of the gospel, which was initiated about three years later as a result of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In fulfilling both these purposes, John's ministry was of necessity brief and temporary. It constituted a period of transition.

In his message John demanded two things : (1) repentance, (2) public confession of sin. Those who were willing to meet these conditions were baptised.

John demanded that those coming to him for baptism should produce evidence in their lives of repentance of sins before he would baptise them. Their baptism served as a visible confirmation that those being baptised had passed through the experience of repentance and forgiveness.

Those who sincerely met John's conditions enjoyed a real experience of repentance and forgiveness which was expressed in lives changed for the better. But these experiences were only transitional. Those whom John baptised did not receive inward peace and victory over sin, made possible only through the full gospel message of Jesus Christ; but their hearts were prepared to receive and respond to the gospel message that was soon to follow.

Christian baptism - fulfilling all righteousness

Let us now turn from the transitional to the permanent - from the baptism of John to full Christian baptism as an integral part of the complete gospel message.

Although Jesus was baptised by John it was different for him. Jesus had never committed any sins he needed to confess or repent of.

Jesus explains to John he must be baptised in order that he might fulfil (or complete) all righteousness.

In this - as in many other aspects of his life and ministry - Jesus was deliberately and consciously establishing a standard of behaviour. By being baptised by John he was setting an example and pattern for all Christians to follow.

Firstly, Jesus was not baptised as an infant. He was baptised when he clearly understood what he was doing and why he was doing it.

Secondly, being baptised is something ordained by God. It is not a legal command such as those imposed upon Israel by the law of Moses, but it is for Christians a natural expression of sincere and wholehearted discipleship.

Thirdly, baptism is an outward act of obedience and dedication to God signifying the inward condition of the heart.

Conditions for Christian baptism

We shall now consider the conditions which must be fulfilled by those desiring to receive Christian baptism.

Repenting

The first condition is stated in Acts 2: 37-38.

“When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do? Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.”

Here in the answer to the question “What shall we do?” Peter gives two commands, first repent, then be baptised.

We have already seen that repentance is the first response God requires from any sinner who desires to be saved. Repentance must precede baptism. Therefore, baptism is the outward seal or affirmation of the inward change produced by repentance.

Believing

Christ himself states the second condition for Christian baptism.

Mark 16: 15-16 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

Here, Christ states that everywhere the gospel is preached, those who desire to be saved are required to do two things: first to believe, then to be baptised. The church in the New Testament took him at his word. Once a person believed in Jesus for salvation, he was then immediately baptised.

Spiritual significance of Christian baptism

In baptism we are identified with Jesus Christ in his three great acts that secured our salvation - his death, burial and resurrection.

His identification with us

The Lord Jesus first came and identified himself with sinners before he called sinners to identify themselves with him. He did this in two ways (1) By his baptism in the Jordan

River Jesus went down into the water in order to stand in the sinners place. He identified himself with them in their relation to God as sinners. His baptism in the river was also a picture of his death, and his coming up from the water as a portrayal of his resurrection, (2) In going to the cross he was our substitute. He bore God's judgement on our sin for us. In his life and his death, Jesus who was sinless, took the place of those who were sinful.

Our identification with him

When we became Christians, two things happened. (1) Our old way of life finished. (2) A completely new way of life began.

Romans 6:11 "*count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*"

2 Corinthians 5:17. "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.*"

The moment our lives were linked with Christ, the two things that happened to him, happened also to us, and we rose with him to a new life. These great truths are clearly demonstrated in baptism. (1). By immersion into the water we are saying in effect that just as Jesus Christ died for our sins on the cross, so we have died to sin in our lives. (2). Under the water - burial of a dead person, just as Jesus was buried in the tomb, so when we are lowered beneath the water our lives as sinners are regarded as put out of sight.

Romans 6:4. "*We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death.*"

Our baptism then becomes a kind of funeral, buried in a watery grave, by which a declaration is made to all that the sinner has been committed to death. Death followed by burial now prevents our returning to our former way of life.

(3). Coming out of the water - resurrection.

Romans 6:5. "*If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.*"

Jesus Christ was raised from the dead by the power of God. We are lifted from the water to live a new and distinctive life, the life of Christ himself.

Galatians 2:20. "*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.*

FOUNDATIONS

LESSON SIX

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The nature of the experience

The Bible uses two pictures to describe the experience of receiving the Holy Spirit. They are ‘baptism’ and ‘drinking’.

Baptism

Baptism is an immersion, but this one comes from above. It is not of water but of the Holy Spirit. A coming down of God’s Spirit from above over the believer, enveloping him in heaven’s atmosphere.

Acts 2:2 “*Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.*”

The whole atmosphere around these believers was filled with the Holy Spirit. They were immersed from above in the supernatural power of God.

It appears in some cases Jesus baptised new believers automatically in other cases it required the laying on of hands and prayer.

At Pentecost and in the house of Cornelius it had to be done through Jesus without the laying on of hands because it was a first in both cases.

It is consistent in Scripture that immersion comes down from above when prayed for or not.

Drinking

The Holy Spirit does not only come down it comes in.

Receiving the Holy Spirit John compares with drinking.

John 7:37. “*If anybody is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.*”

Then he moves from not having enough for himself (thirsty) to being a channel for others.

John 7:38. “*Streams of living water will flow from within him.*”

ONE OF THE PURPOSES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS TO BE ABLE TO RELATE TO OTHERS.

Maybe you have enough to get you to heaven but you don't have enough to reach a needy world!

"Streams" plural to meet all sorts of people and many different needs.

Matthew 12:34. "*For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.*"

When the heart is full it can't hold its contents where does it flow? It is a supernatural overflow.

How do you know when a vessel is full it overflows.

Baptism is not forced

The Holy Spirit is not a dictator he is our "comforter" and "teacher."

If a spirit came to you and makes you do something, you have the wrong spirit.

You will not get anymore from the Holy Spirit than you are willing to yield to him.

GOD ONLY CONSUMES WITH FIRE WHAT YOU ARE PREPARED TO PLACE ON THE ALTAR OF SACRIFICE.

You can be filled with the Holy Spirit but it will do you no good if you are not willing to be guided, counselled, directed and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT REQUIRES A LIFE OF CONTINUAL SUBMISSION AND WAITING ON GOD.

It is much easier to get filled than it is to stay filled.

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is not a substitute

It is not a substitute for any other provision of God.

When you put on the armour of God every part has its part to play. Leave off any one part and the other parts do not cover it.

Love is not a substitute for the Holy Spirit. You need love and the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit is no substitute for love.

An unfamiliar realm

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a spiritual experience, a supernatural experience.

In many cases the first supernatural experience that many Christians have ever had. Therefore often not at home in this new realm.

It is a realm of spiritual conflict that they never knew before.

Mark 1: 12-13. “*At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, and he was in the desert for forty days, being tempted by Satan.*”

Once you are baptised in the Holy Spirit the demonic becomes more real. Many more avenues are open into your mind and your spirit.

Matthew 4:4-10 explains how Jesus overcame Satan’s spiritual attacks with the Scripture, he said “*it is written.*”

Satan can quote Scripture - you have to overcome him by quoting it better.

Ephesians 6:17. “*Takethe sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*”

The Holy Spirit does not defend us but when we speak God’s word the Holy Spirit empowers our words to defeat the attacks from Satan.

For example: Jesus said “*Peace be still*” and the wind and the waves had to be still because Jesus’ words were empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of the experience

There are a number of important purposes that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is intended by God to accomplish in the believers life.

How much it will accomplish depends on the believer.

The Holy Spirit is a gateway into the supernatural

After ones baptism in the Holy Spirit it is God’s intention that believers would walk in the supernatural.

The supernatural should become natural and the Book of Acts is intended to be a picture of the Christian church, the supernatural on every page.

Acts 19:11. “*God did extraordinary miracles through Paul.*”

In other words Paul did the kind of miracles that did not happen every day. Miracles were every day occurrences.

For witnessing

Acts 1:8. “*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you: and you will be my witnesses*”.

We are clothed with the Holy Spirit from on high so we can be witnesses,

Notice “my witnesses” we witness about Jesus not a doctrine, church or experience.

For prayer

Romans 8:26. Tells us we all have a weakness - we do not know how to pray what we ought to pray.

One big mistake we make in prayer is telling God what he ought to be doing.

Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. We allow the person of the Holy Spirit to conduct a prayer meeting in and through us.

For teaching

The Holy Spirit is the great teacher of the Scriptures. He comes to lead us into all truth and reveal Jesus to us. He comes to be the interpreter of God's word to us.

For guidance

We live in a dangerous world. The Spirit comes to guide us or we will go wrong many times. Let him guide you every day.

John 16:13. "*But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.*"
Hebrews 11:7. "*By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen..."*

We are ushered into the council of heaven when we are baptised in the Holy Spirit.

For health

The life of Christ is made manifest in our body. Not only the unseen life but also the visible manifest life.

For some who come to Christ the Holy Spirit in their body breaks the habit of drugs, drink, blaspheming etc., in an instant.

The life of Christ comes in through the person of the Holy Spirit and completely overwhelms the flesh life.

Romans 8:11. "*He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies."*

A sure and certain hope of the resurrection and the promise of the power of God to reconstitute the elements that form your mortal body.

For unity

1 Corinthians 12:13. "*For we are all baptised by one Spirit into one body."*

The ultimate purpose of God in baptising believers in the Holy Spirit is to unite them into one body. When the Jews heard the Gentiles speak with other tongues it was the only thing that united them in the one church and the one body.

FOUNDATIONS

LESSON SEVEN

The Resurrection of the Dead

The four doctrines we have already considered have all been directly related to this present world and to the realm of time. However, in the study of the two doctrines remaining, we are taken, by the revelation of God's word, out of this present world into the realm of eternity.

The rich man Lazarus

Luke 16: 19-31

This passage of Scripture reads like a parable. Some believe it is a picture of heaven and hell. I believe it is an actual account of what Jesus had seen.

Prior to the death of Jesus

Before Christ's death and resurrection everybody who died "died in their sins." The price of forgiveness and cleansing of sin's stain had not yet been paid by Jesus.

The righteous and the wicked

All those who died before Calvary, because they "died in their sins" could not enter the presence of God. However, by God they were declared either righteous or wicked. By righteous I mean they lived believing in the one invisible God and they lived in obedience (as far as they were possible) by the eternal law of God in their heart. Later the Israelites received God's law through Moses. So when they died God credited righteousness to them because of their faith and obedience.

The wicked were those who refused to live by God's eternal law in their heart and lived independent of God. That is, they lived without faith in God, God called them WICKED.

The destiny of everyone

Jesus is not describing heaven and hell as some may think but a place called Sheol or Hades (translated hell).

It is the place of departed spirits.

The place was divided into two chambers:

A smaller region for those declared 'righteous' by God.

A larger region for those declared 'wicked' by God.

The two are separated by a great chasm and there is no movement between them. We might also consider it to be an upper and lower region.

The death of Jesus

Prior to the death of Jesus we read about him in the Garden of Gethsemane
Matthew 26: 36-46.

What is it that is overwhelming him, causing him so much anguish? Through his life he had sustained many of Satan's attacks. He had never faltered and through them all maintained a sinless life. But he knew what he faced was going to be the greatest onslaught any human being had ever faced from the courts of Satan. The fear that assaulted him was that he might fail.

- He would be arrested like a criminal in a night raid.
- Hauled before a kangaroo court.
- He would be falsely accused by bribed witnesses.
- He would be spat on, beaten and humiliated.
- His closest friends would all desert him.
- Peter would deny him
- He would be flogged mercilessly.
- He would be stripped and executed.

Would he remain faithful to his Father and all who depended on him?

The souls of all those in the upper region of Hades depended on him. The millions not yet born, depended on him. God the Father, God the Holy Spirit and the angelic host were all focused and depending on the man Jesus.

Would he:

- Forgive his accusers?
- Insult the religious authorities of the day?
- Despise the soldiers?
- Hold Pilot in contempt?
- Blame God his Father?
- Run away?
- Call down angels?

Would he fail at his greatest hour?
How much he needed his companions prayers.

Jesus triumphs

At every stage in every step from the Lord's supper to the giving up of his spirit
HE TRIUMPHED.

Late in the afternoon his body was put into the tomb and he (his soul and spirit) stepped into eternity. Eternity is not a measure of time but it is where God dwells. It is the dimension where physical human beings cannot enter but at death our souls move into.

Jesus in Hades

Jesus stands in Hades, Sheol, the Netherworld, the place of departed spirits. He is there to welcome the repentant thief on the cross. He said “***today you will be with me in paradise***”. Jesus was there to welcome him. The third man crucified was taken by the angel of death to the lower region.

In the heart of the earth

In Hades Jesus travelled down into the lower region where we are told he preached or proclaimed to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.

Jesus preached through Noah

Thousands of years previous Jesus preached through Noah encouraging the people to live by God’s eternal law and put their faith in God’s word regarding the ark.

God’s means of salvation for these people.

But they chose not to put their faith in God’s provision so they all died as wicked men not righteous.

What Jesus proclaimed is not clear. Perhaps he made it clear that man’s destiny was not dependent upon the favour of God but man choosing to accept God’s provision of salvation.

Jesus sets the captives free

After sunset on Saturday all of those held captive in the upper chamber of Hades were released. They followed Jesus out of that place.

Ephesians 4: 7-9. “***When he ascended on high he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men. What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions***”.

As Jesus rose from the dead he had not only saved our bodies but our souls as well.

His soul and spirit re-entered his body in the tomb and he rose from the dead. All those who put their faith in the death and physical resurrection of Jesus will also be raised from the dead in the same manner.

A proof that we too will be raised

Matthew 27:52-53. “***The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus’ resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people***”.

This was to fulfil what Jesus said in John 12:23-24.

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds".

In the parable of the sower those with noble and good hearts produced a hundredfold return. May I suggest that one hundred were raised with Jesus as a sign to the thousands and millions who eventually would rise - us included.

Our resurrection

When Jesus returns. If we have died and our souls have gone to be in the presence of God we will on that day be reunited with our physical bodies and live forever with Jesus never to be separated again. If we are alive when Jesus comes we will pass from time into eternity and receive our resurrection bodies.

Those who have died in their sins will have to wait for a future time when they too will be resurrected.

Our great hope

This is our GREAT HOPE that makes all the hardship and sacrifice we have experienced here worthwhile. And it is this HOPE that will spur us on in our love and service to him.

FOUNDATIONS

LESSON EIGHT

Eternal Judgement

There are three main successive scenes upon which eternal judgement will be carried out.

Each marked out from the other by the type of seat the judge will sit on while carrying out the judgement.

- 1) The judgement seat of Christ - the judgement of Christ's own followers.
- 2) The throne of Christ's glory - the judgement of the Gentile nations upon Christ's return to earth.
- 3) The great white throne judgement - those to be judged at the second resurrection.

In all three Christ will be the judge and it will be final. In every case it will be an individual matter.

The only judgement we need to concern ourselves as born again believers serving Christ is the judgement seat of Christ's judgement.

The court scene

In most court scene judgements we see a defendant in the dock sitting before the judge. The judgement will either condemn or acquit the defendant. Our judgement will not be for condemnation or acquittal but to assess our rewards. A judgement in respect of service not sin.

In coming to Christ he gifted you and appointed you for a particular service, have you completed that work and how did you do it?

Through faith in Christ God granted you righteousness and sealed your salvation by the Holy Spirit. You could say you have on you God's stamp of approval.

His judgement described in parables

Let's take a break from the court proceedings to look at what Jesus taught on rewards.

There are two parables we must study. The parable of the talents, Matthew 25: 14-30 and the parable of the Minas, Luke 19: 11-26.

In both parables Jesus emphasises "we must pay attention to what has been given to us."

The parable of the talents

The talents represent the gifts God has given us to build the kingdom. A person's ability to write, teach, preach, sing, design, manage, lead, serve, provide, show mercy or encourage etc.,

Notice to one he gives 5 and to another 2 - the number represents the degree or level of the calling.

The man who receives 5 talents labours diligently and finishes with 10 talents. The man with 2 talents works just as diligently and ends up with 4 talents. Notice their reward is the same.

Matthew 25: 21,23. *"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share in your master's happiness!"*

If we compare ourselves with others we may think little of our efforts or God's blessing. The fact is God probably gave one person more gifting than another to accomplish his assignment.

"You were perfectly created by God to function in the kingdom and have the gifts and abilities to fulfil your specific assignment. So in regard to what we have, we cannot compare our measured result with others."

The parable of the Minas

A similar parable with a different emphasis.

Jesus discusses ten servants rather than three and each is given the same - one mina.

The mina does not represent our different levels of calling or special gifts as with the talents. Rather the mina represents the grace of God that he makes available to each Christian in equal amounts, the mind of Christ, the armour of God, the promises of God, the love of God etc.,

In the parable the first servant multiplied his grace by ten therefore he was rewarded greatly with authority over ten cities. The second multiplied God's grace in his life by five and he was rewarded with authority over five cities. The reward was less because he only produced half the fruit.

Preparing us for what to expect

The two parables are there to prepare us for what to expect. It would be unfair of God to judge us without explaining the rules.

- 1) A judgement score based on our diligence in areas of specific calling and assignment.
- 2) A judgement score based on our general life situation and our personal response.

Jesus shares these parables with us to encourage us to press on with what God has assigned for us to do and to co-operate with the Holy Spirit in letting Christ be formed in us.

A closure to all life's events

It will be at the judgement seat that Christ will bring closure to our lives lived in this present world.

1. The healing of wounds suffered in silence

Things have happened in your life where the truth never came out. You were innocent but after the event others did not look upon you in the same way. The pain in your soul both helped and injured you. Jesus will say - "I always knew the truth."

2. The forgiveness for the wounds you have inflicted

In your life you have hurt people and carried the pain of that all your life. On that day it will be put right, never again to torment you.

3. The uncovering of every deception that bound you

Throughout your life the devil has deceived you and stolen from you numerous blessings the Lord had for you. On that day all will be made plain - God was never holding out on you - but you allowed Satan to dominate and affect your eternal reward.

4. You will know yourself as you really are

On that day you will know your true value to God. You will for the first time realise how much Christ loves you. The disparity of the two loves will take your breath away.

5. You will be rewarded by him

Your life's work will fall into two categories. All wood, hay and straw will be burnt up. Only gold, silver and precious stones will remain.

You will receive your reward and no matter how great or small, your heart will be filled with thankfulness. Even if your reward is less than others, you will know and accept Christ's perfect judgement. There will be no jealousy, comparison or unthankfulness.

6. You will take what you have received and invest it in his glory

As you move away from the throne every thought of self will be swallowed up in your thoughts of him. And for the first time in the body you will truly be free of self. You will be free for the rest of eternity to invest all of yourself and what you have in expressing his glory and never again your own.

From that moment - life in this fallen body will be over and you will know the fulness of being a new creation in Christ.

Free from sin, free from death to live as God always intended.

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