

CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE POSTAL COURSETutor's Name: Date: Student's Name: Ref No.: **LESSON 20 • Baptism**WEEKLY READINGS
READING FOR STUDY PAPERExodus 27-32, Matthew 5-7
Acts 8, Romans 6**A new start**

Have you ever watched a small child, when he turns over to a new page of his writing book? The new page looks so clean and unspoiled, that he takes extra care, as he begins to write, that he doesn't spoil it. He makes a fresh start.

When we begin to understand how much Jesus has done for us, we shall want to "turn over a new leaf" and make a fresh start, too. We shall want to follow Him.

God's way

In Matthew, chapter 28, verse 19, we read that Jesus said to His disciples, before He went into heaven, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, (or, make disciples of all nations) baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

Read these verses carefully. You will notice that when they made disciples, they were to baptise them. Baptism is the way God has chosen for us to make a new start.

When we obey this commandment, God forgives us our past sins. Jesus Himself, although He had done no sin, set us an example by being baptised. Read in Matthew, chapter 3, verses 13-17, how Jesus came to the River Jordan, and how His cousin John baptised Him there.

Have you noticed that, when John said that he was unworthy to baptise Jesus, he was told: "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew, chapter 3, verse 15).

He did not say "me", he said "us", showing that we too must be baptised. It is essential for salvation.

Burial in water

Baptism means a complete burial under water. It is as though, when we go under the water, we die, and when we come out of the water again, we are ready to begin a new life. In a way, we die with Christ, and then we rise with Him. Paul tells us this in the chapter you have read in Romans. Read again verses 3-4, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into His death? "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Christening and Baptism

Perhaps you have heard of babies being "baptised" or christened, when they are sprinkled with water on the forehead. But this is not really baptism. You remember Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved" (Mark, chapter 16, verse 16). We must understand and believe first, and a baby cannot do this.

And, of course, being sprinkled with water is not the same as being buried in it and coming up again out of the water. It cannot remind us in the same way of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

A man who believed and was baptised

You will notice in the reading in Acts, chapter 8, that the eunuch, a servant of the Queen of Ethiopia, said, "Here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised?" (verse 36).

There was one condition. Philip said to him,

"If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest" (verse 37).

You will notice, too, that "they went down both into the water" (verse 38). That was necessary because Philip was going to baptise the eunuch by burying him completely under the water.

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A big decision

Here is another very important passage about baptism: "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women" (Acts, chapter 8, verse 12).

We learn from this quotation that people should not rush into baptism before they are ready. The men and women of Samaria were not baptised until "they believed...the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ." Deciding to be baptised is the most important decision of a lifetime. It is not a decision to make lightly. Before baptism, it is necessary to understand, and believe, the true teaching of the Bible. After baptism, it is necessary to fight against temptation and try to obey God's commandments always.

Without these things - belief of true Bible teaching first, and obedience to God afterwards - baptism is worthless.

Children of God

We are born the children of Adam. But when we are baptised we are taken into the family of God, and we become the children of God. Every man and woman is a child of Adam, and the Bible speaks of them as being "in Adam".

When we are baptised, we "put on Christ", and are spoken of as being "in Christ". Paul tells us in Galatians, chapter 3, verses 26-27, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. "For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ."

We have new hope of life, for we read in I Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 22, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Christ our Mediator

We make a fresh start at our baptism. But we cannot live without sinning. What happens if we sin, after we are baptised? Because we are "in Christ", we have Jesus Christ to be our mediator, and to pray to God for us - and, if we are really sorry we have sinned, we may be sure that God will hear Him, and forgive us our sins for His sake. The apostle John writes, "If any man sin, we have an advocate (or, a mediator) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (I John, chapter 2, verse 1).

Summary

1. God has commanded us to be baptised.
2. Baptism is a complete burial in water.
3. Because baptism must follow belief, it is for adults, not babies.
4. In a figure, we die with Christ, and rise out of the water to a new life.
5. When we are baptised, we become the children of God, and the Bible speaks of us as being "in Christ".