

## Can Biblical Faith Oppose Baptism?



9.27.20

Purpose of this lesson:

Many people of faith are quick to deny that baptism in Jesus' name is for the remission of sins. They believe the blood of Jesus has washed away their sins while they fiercely oppose the revealed biblical means to procure it (Acts 2:38; 22:16). They reason that, because they believe in Jesus and what He accomplished for us on the cross, their sins are thereby removed. In other words, they believe simple faith in Jesus and the atonement provides remission. However, there is not a word of Scripture, properly interpreted, to support their view.

This lesson is designed to answer the following question: Because a person believes Jesus died for his sins, is it appropriate or theologically correct to disregard Christ's prescription for the remission of sins? —Or, in other words, can biblical faith oppose baptism?

### **The tremendous creation of the human race**

Human beings are the height of God's creation. We are the most perfect specimen of earthly creation. We are made in God's very image. When we see the incarnate God, we will see a fellow human being. The Apostle John said we will be like Him (1John 3:2). He graciously made us to share life with Him. It is an unfathomable kindness. It reflects the goodness and unselfishness of God perhaps more than any other thing. We, as a race and as individuals, are very important to Him. He loves us beyond our ability to understand. The fact that He made us is powerful evidence that He wants us to be with Him forever.

### **The declaration of God that death would result from sin**

God gave us life— a life very similar to His Own— but we are not in a peer relationship with Him. Our lives are derived from Him and are sustained by Him. He is our God and we are accountable to Him to live our lives according to His perfect plan for us. These are the things He revealed to us in His Word.

When God created Adam, He warned him regarding disobedience, which we commonly call sin, the consequence of which is death (Genesis 2:17). Because Adam and Eve failed to heed this warning, our race has suffered unimaginably because every person has inherited a sinful nature.

### **Sin is mankind's biggest dilemma.**

Human beings are quite remarkable. We as a race and as individuals have accomplished tremendous things. But our downfall is sin. Due to sin, we each have a

sentence of death and eternal condemnation upon us (Romans 3:23; 6:23). We each need salvation. And however salvation would come to be, it must deal with the fact of ridding us of sin.

### **The ratification of the eternal plan of God to save mankind**

God's answer to man's dilemma of sin was the cross of Christ. Calvary was ratified from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). From eternity past, God foresaw Adam's fall but still considered humanity a race worth saving— even by such an unthinkable means as dying on the cross to atone for our sins. This, God would do in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4-5). But a point of theological significance is that this great sacrifice of Christ would underwrite all the means of God's merciful redemption in its various forms throughout redemptive history (Romans 3:25-26), beginning with Adam and Eve. This means two things:

1/ Without Christ's atoning sacrifice, there could be no salvation by any means.

2/ Each means of redemption offered by God throughout redemptive history would avail solely and precisely because of Christ's shed blood, regardless of the dispensation involved. (A dispensation is a specific time period in redemptive history in which God dealt with mankind in a prescribed way— for example, the Law dispensation.)

But it is equally important to note that, while the blood of Christ underwrites all the redemption that will ever take place on earth, merely citing the fact of the atonement of Christ was never presented as a means of salvation.

### **The enactment of God's plan to save souls**

As we are informed by Scripture, Adam and Eve fell into sin and our race was doomed. But when God came to the Garden of Eden to judge Adam and Eve, He enacted His plan of redemption with the announcement of the coming Savior (Genesis 3:15). This, as we came to understand with the fulfillment of prophecy, involved the incarnation of God Himself to die in our place.

### **The institution of substitutionary sacrifice**

On the ground of the coming incarnation of God as our perfect vicarious sacrifice, God instituted animal sacrifice as a temporary means of dealing with man's sin. It is immediately seen at the dawn of civilization and redemptive history. An animal sacrifice was involved in the clothing of Adam and Eve. And, we see it highly conspicuous in the religious devotion of Abel (Genesis 4:4). It was apparently the plan God revealed to Adam and his immediate descendants for dealing with their own sinfulness and, thereby, was the means for them to obtain right standing with God. Next, consider the Jews of the Old Testament and their many substitutionary animal sacrifices, all intended to deal with sin, and by which they were reconciled to God.

From these two examples, briefly presented, it is clear that God provided a means of salvation involving innocent blood.

### **The necessity of these sacrifices**

Those sacrifices were absolutely necessary. This is evident from God's rebuke of Cain, who offered inferiorly (Genesis 4:7). The sacrifices that occurred in the Old Testament were the means for souls in those respective dispensations to be in right standing with God. It was noted by the writer of Hebrews that remission of their sins was the all-important result (Hebrews 9:22).

### **The ineffectiveness of animal sacrifices, though they were necessary**

Over time, a river of blood flowed from the many Old Testament sacrifices. But the New Testament makes it clear that not one of those sacrifices was sufficient in itself to wash away sin, nor were all of them combined (Hebrews 10:4). Then how were they efficacious to remit sin? Answer: They were the divinely prescribed means of salvation in their time, which would later be underwritten by the shed blood of Christ. The animal sacrifices involved innocent blood but they weren't, in themselves, sufficient to remit sins because remission required a perfect human sacrifice (1Corinthians 15:21-22).

### **The fulfillment of the eternal plan of God involving the cross**

In the fullness of time, Jesus came to give His life as a perfect sacrifice (Galatians 4:4). John the Baptist introduced Him as the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). This is the fulfillment of what God had planned from the foundation of the world to save mankind (Revelation 13:8). On the basis of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, every dispensational means of salvation was underwritten and, thus, validated (Romans 3:25-26). This would be the case to the very end of time.

### **The precious blood of Christ would underwrite every prescription of God for salvation to the very end of time.**

We have already explained how Christ's blood validated the Old Testament sacrifices and enabled their offerers to be in right standing with God. It didn't stop there. Every means of salvation since Calvary, likewise, is totally underwritten by Jesus' blood. We are currently in the Christian Church era. The revealed means to receive remission of sins in this dispensation is through baptism in Jesus' name (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Souls who will be saved after the Rapture of the Church and throughout the thousand-year-long Millennial period will have different means of salvation according to their respective dispensations. But, once again, they will be validated by what Jesus did on the cross. The point we want to stress here is that the atonement is associated with the divinely appointed means of salvation in every dispensation. It is never independent of them. Nor is the atonement efficacious apart from them because they

are the divinely prescribed means necessary to effect the application of Christ's blood. The atonement made every tenet of salvation throughout redemptive history efficacious but didn't replace a single one. In no dispensation would it have been appropriate or acceptable to disregard the tenets of salvation offered by God and simply claim to have remission of sins because one believes in the atonement.

### **The plan of salvation in the Christian era**

Peter announced the terms of Christian salvation on the Day of Pentecost. He specifically declared to those seeking reconciliation that baptism in Jesus' name is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:37-38). Ananias, a man sent by God to attend the conversion of the Apostle Paul, affirmed the same thing (Acts 22:16). Even though we know the blood of Jesus is the basis of our salvation, we cannot dismiss the plan of salvation that facilitates it. For someone to reason that he believes his sins are washed away merely because he trusts Christ's work on the cross is to be ignorant of the biblical means to actually apply the blood and receive the invaluable remission of sins.

### **Conclusion**

At the outset, we said this lesson is designed to answer the following question: Because a person believes Jesus died for his sins, is it appropriate or theologically correct to disregard His prescription for the remission of sins? I think we have shown adequately that it is not.

### **Imagine for a second...**

Imagine for a second if a person of faith in past redemptive history could have had understanding of Romans 3:25 and had known the role the blood of Christ would play in underwriting redemption in his time. Would that have been reason for him to dismiss the means prescribed by God to effect remission relative to his dispensation by simply declaring, "I believe the blood of Jesus will eventually cover my sin"? Certainly not. The then-present means of redemption were indispensable because it was those very means that were underwritten and validated by Calvary. For example, Abel would not have been justified by mere faith in the future atonement of Christ apart from the animal sacrifices God had required in his own time (Hebrews 11:4). And, had any of the Old Testament saints rejected the means available to them at the time, they would have rejected the blood of Christ that came to be associated with them.

The same is true today. Baptism in Jesus' name is prescribed in the Christian era explicitly and specifically for the removal of sin (Acts 2:38; 22:16). This is so because, as in former dispensations, the blood of Jesus underwrites the present divinely prescribed means. It is not appropriate today, therefore, to merely claim Christ's atonement apart from the means He instituted to effect its efficacy. It wouldn't have been appropriate or effective in past dispensations and neither is it in our own. In fact, at every point of redemptive history, including our own, had understanding of Romans

3:25 been universally grasped, it would only have been appropriate to say, when referring to the atonement, "I believe the blood of Jesus covers my sin, according to the divinely appointed means which effect it in my dispensation".

Baptism in Jesus' name is that very means today. Therefore, the person who rejects that patent Scriptural provision rejects the blood of Christ that underwrites it. Christ's sin-cleansing blood is only available through the indispensable tenets God has prescribed in association with it. To repeat what we said earlier, merely citing the fact of the atonement was never presented as a means of salvation.