

BAPTIST HOUR SERMONS

for April



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THE ANSWER TO DESPAIR

April 5, 1959

Scripture: Acts 2:14-41

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost Spirit”—Acts 2:38.

When Peter stood up to preach at Pentecost, he centered in the life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement of Jesus Christ. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

In this light only can you understand the people’s response to Peter’s sermon as they were plunged into the depths of despair. “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (v.37). Their despair is best seen in the original Greek where the word “and” is not used. “Men, brethren, what shall we do?”

They were under conviction for their sin. They realized that they were enemies of Jehovah. Jesus had said that when the Holy Spirit came, He would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn. 16:8). Now for the first time He has used the preaching of one of Christ’s messengers to do so. They realized that their sin was against God, their self-righteousness had killed the righteous Son of God, and that they were under the just condemnation of God.

But do you ask, “What has all this to do with me?” Simply this. In your unbelief you, too, are an enemy of God. Even though you were not at Calvary in person, you were there in your sin. Note that all who heard Peter preach probably were not present at the crucifixion. Acts 2:9-11 says that there were in Peter’s congregation men from all parts of the Roman Empire, men who probably had come to Jerusalem to observe the feast of Pentecost. But Peter makes no distinction between them and those who had

actually participated in the crucifixion. Nor can you. For Jesus died not only for one small segment of men, but for all men. He died for you!

Until in conviction you realize this, it is impossible for you to be saved. Your sin first of all is against God. This David recognized when in Psalm 51:4 he cried, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Until you view your sin in this light, you cannot realize the awful guilt that is upon your soul. Seen only as some wrong done to yourself or to some other person, it is comparatively negligible. But when you understand that in your sin you nailed the Son of God to a cross, it takes on infinite proportions. Indeed your sin is greater than that of these first century Jews. Of them Peter said in Acts 3:17, "And now, brethren, I wot (know) that through ignorance ye did it." But you stand on the other side of the cross. For you know that through the resurrection "God hath made that same Jesus, whom

ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Therefore, your unbelief, or refusal to believe in Jesus, is the greatest of all sins. In John 3:18 Jesus said, "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Under such condemnation will you not cry, "Men, brethren, what shall I do?"

Peter's answer to this cry was forthcoming, as he gave the Christian answer to despair. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost Spirit." This is our answer to you. Three thoughts stand out in this verse: repent, be baptized, the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The word "repent" translates a Greek word meaning to change one's mind or attitude. When the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin, either you will rebel against God or else "repent" in the sense of changing your attitude or the whole direction of your life. Now you love sin and hate righteousness. Then you will love righteousness and hate sin. Now you rebel against God and serve Satan. Then you will renounce Satan and serve God. Repent in this sense is an act of the will. True repentance means that you sever your allegiance to Satan and avow your loyalty to God. In your life you will crown Jesus as "both Lord and Christ."

Note that Peter says nothing about believing in Jesus, an act repeatedly given in the New Testament as the grounds of salvation. Actually believing is involved in repentance. Thus in repentance you transfer not only your loyalty but also your trust from Satan to God. This you do as you receive Jesus into your heart as God's Christ or Anointed One for your salvation, accepting His death on the cross as the penalty for your sin; and in making Him the Lord of your life.

But the great problem is encountered in Peter's statement "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. Note that Peter

Baptist Hour Sermon

Topics for May

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Theme: BELIEF

May 3—In Whom Do You Believe?

May 10—In What Do You Believe?

May 17—The Universal Necessity

**May 24—Justification Through
Faith**

May 31—The Tragedy of Unbelief

Hear them on

THE BAPTIST HOUR

Read them in

THE BEAM

said, "Be baptized *every one of you . . .*" (author's italics). In the Greek "repent" is plural and "be baptized" is singular. Thus all are to repent right then and there. But each one separately is to be baptized. Of course repentance is an individual act, although a multitude may do so simultaneously. But baptism is administered to each as a separate act. Baptism is administered on the basis of an individual personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Thus one cannot be baptized for another. Nor can one be baptized scripturally who is incapable mentally or because of age of experiencing for himself repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ as one's Saviour. Baptism is to be administered "in the name of Jesus Christ," or with respect to His saving work.

Which brings us to consider the phrase "for the remission of sins." This is one of the favorite proof texts of those who insist that baptism is a sacrament, or is necessary for salvation. And a surface reading of this might well lead one to conclude thusly. But let us examine this further.

First, note that no one verse of scripture should be interpreted in opposition to the overall teaching of the Bible. The vast body of New Testament scripture teaches salvation through faith, with no reference to baptism. Even Peter in Acts 3:19 says, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," with no reference to baptism. Another proof text cited for baptismal regeneration is Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized not shall be damned." However the oldest and best manuscripts of Mark 16 end with verse 8. In all probability verses 9-20 are not a genuine part of the Gospel. Note that this section also includes snake handling and poison drinking as evidence of one's faith. But even if you accept this as genuine scripture, note that it also says, "He that believeth not shall be damned," with no reference to baptism.

Second, in Acts 2:38 let us consider the word "for" the remission of sins. The

word "for" translates a Greek preposition, *eis*, which may be variously translated for, into, unto, because of, on the basis of, with respect to, or as the result of. Thus we note two uses: aim or purpose, and basis or ground. It is used in I Corinthians 2:7 as aim or purpose. "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto (for) our glory."

But it is also used as basis or ground. In Matthew 10:41 Jesus said, "He that receiveth a prophet *in (eis)* the name of a prophet . . . he that receiveth a righteous man *in (eis)* the name of a righteous man . . . whosoever shall give to drink . . . *in (eis)* the name of a disciple . . ." (author's italics) Here three times the same preposition is used as basis or ground: on the basis of the name of a prophet, righteous man, or disciple. But the clearest use is found in Matthew 12:41. "The men of Nineveh . . . repented *at (eis)* the preaching of Jonas" (author's italics). The Ninevites repented not in order that Jonah might preach, but because of or as the result of his preaching.

So Acts 2:38, in the light of the foregoing and of the vast body of New Testament teaching, should most certainly read, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you . . . for (on the basis of or as the result of) the remission of sins." Note our own use of the word "for." "He was executed *for* murder," not in order that he might murder but because he had already murdered. You are to be baptized not in order that your sins might be remitted, but because they have already been remitted.

Thus baptism is not a sacrament but a symbol—a symbol of what Jesus has done for your salvation. In baptism therefore you symbolize that in which you are trusting for salvation—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Furthermore, you symbolize your death to an old life, its burial, and your resurrection from such death to walk in your new life in Christ.

In the light of the above meanings of the Greek preposition *eis*, Romans 6:3-4 should read, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into (with respect to) Jesus Christ were baptized into (with respect to or on the basis of) his death? Therefore we are buried with him by (through) baptism into (with respect to) death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in (*en*, a different preposition) newness of life."

Jesus did all that is necessary for your salvation, and John 4:2 plainly says, "Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples." As Peter so plainly states it in his sermon, you are to repent of sin and trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus for your salvation.

What then is the place of baptism? You are not baptized into the kingdom of God, but into the membership of the local church. In so doing you join with the body of Christian witnesses who like

yourself have trusted in Jesus' saving work for salvation. With them you become a partaker of the gift of the Holy Spirit who came upon the church for effective witnessing. Thus not only is your soul saved from sin, but your Christian life will be saved from failure as you become a witness to a lost world regarding the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.

My plea is that you repent of your sin and trust in Jesus for salvation right now. Then present yourself on the basis of that experience for baptism into the membership of one of His churches. In beautiful baptism symbolize that which Jesus did for your salvation and which is involved in your Christian experience. Then give yourself fully to the power of the Holy Spirit as a living testimony as to what Jesus is able to do for anyone who will call upon Him in faith. Write to tell me about it as I join with you in prayer for our mutual service for our wonderful Saviour.

THE ANSWER TO INQUIRY

April 12, 1959

Scripture: Acts 4:1-12

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"—Acts 4:12

The Sanhedrin was within its right in inquiring of Peter and John, "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" (v.7). For Deuteronomy 13 instructed them that if any prophet performed a sign among them designed to lead them away from Jehovah, they were to examine him. If he were found guilty they were to put him to death.

That a miracle had been performed they could not deny. For the lame man who begged at the gate Beautiful now stood before them healed.

This afforded Peter an opportunity to

preach. Courageously and plainly he replied, "By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole" (v.10). Note that the Sanhedrin asked first about the *power* and then about the *name*, as though the power were a demonic one. In Peter's reply he reversed the order. First, he declared the name—Jesus Christ of Nazareth. He did not simply say the Messiah. Nor did he merely call Him Jesus. But he said, "By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified." There must be no question as to His identity. Second, he named the power—"whom God raised from the dead." Thus he drove home to them the truth that Jesus of Nazareth was their Messiah whom they had cruci-