

By Faith Lesson 25

The Command of Baptism

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ..." (Matt. 28:19,20)	"Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in His arms and blessed them." (Mark 10:14-16)
"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also, now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good Conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 3:21)	"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 into newness of life." (Rom 6:4)

We have been present at the solemn occasion of baptism. The small child in white garments, the minister performing baptism, the parents, the godparents and the other visitors have gathered around the baptismal basin. The child has been in the arms of the mother, father or godparent.

Jesus Established Baptism

From this baptismal ceremony, we remember the above Bible passage from Matt. 28:19,20. It is the baptismal command. Jesus gave it to His own before ascending into heaven. The baptismal command also includes teaching.

We have also heard the second Bible passage during the occasion of baptism. Jesus teaches that small children are children of God. They are God's own already at birth, for our Savior was once also born as a man and redeemed us. Children are blessed because of His redemption work.

Why are children baptized, if they are already blessed? They are baptized so that they would remain blessed. The sacrament of baptism is the covenant of a good conscience. Read 1 Pet. 3:21 carefully.

The covenant of a good conscience

The covenant of a good conscience contains responsibilities which concern the parents, the godparents and above all those who are baptized, so that faith and a good conscience would be preserved. They do not survive by themselves. A good conscience is preserved in the caretaking of the kingdom of God. There, a person can find the living water, of which the outward baptismal water testifies. With its help the heart remains pure, and with its power the powers of sin which arise from the corrupted or "old" man are suppressed.

Repentance is a return to the covenant of baptism.

The covenant of a good conscience contains responsibilities which concern the parents, the godparents and above all those who are baptized, so that faith and a good conscience would be preserved. They do not survive by themselves. A good conscience is preserved in the caretaking of the kingdom of God. There, a person can find the living water, of which the outward baptismal water testifies. With its help the heart remains pure, and with its power the powers of sin which arise from the corrupted or "old" man are suppressed.

When a person who is deceived by the enemy of soul, falls into unbelief, he violates from his own part the grace covenant of baptism with God. On God's part, however, this covenant remains in effect, so that when the unbeliever receives the grace of repentance, he can return again to the covenant of a good conscience. He does not have to be baptized again, for repentance is a return to baptism.

God's hope is that we would remain in the grace covenant of baptism throughout all of our lifetime.

Exercises

1. Place the following words in the correct order, according to the practice of baptism during the time of the apostles: baptism, faith, doctrine, preaching. (Acts 2:38,41,42) Compare these verses to Acts 10:44-48. You will notice the similarity. What had these people received before baptism by water?
2. According to the Bible, children have faith and the Holy Spirit. That is why they are acceptable for baptism. What basis for this matter can you find from the teaching of Jesus? (Matt. 18:1-10)
3. What sacrament in the Old Testament corresponded to baptism?