

BAPTISM
PRESENTED BY
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GREEN LAWN CHURCH OF CHRIST
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LAST LORD'S DAY EVENING WE LOOKED AT THE SUBJECT OF "OBEDIENCE." TONIGHT, WE COME TO LOOK AT A SPECIFIC ACT OF OBEDIENCE--THE ACT OF BAPTISM. IT IS NOT FAR FROM ACCURATE TO SAY THAT THE SUBJECT OF BAPTISM HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF MORE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE DENOMINATIONS THAN ALMOST ANY OTHER SUBJECT. I THINK THERE ARE A NUMBER OF REASONS WHICH MIGHT BE ADDUCED FOR THIS DIFFERENCE. ONE REASON IS THAT THE DENOMINATIONAL WORLD AND THE CHURCH HAVE TO SOME DEGREE FAILED TO APPRECIATE THE BIBLE TEACHING RELATIVE TO BAPTISM. NOW IT MAY BE THAT YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND HOW I COULD MAKE A STATEMENT LIKE THAT, PARTICULARLY TO SAY THAT THE CHURCH DOES NOT SOMETIMES SEEM TO FULLY UNDERSTAND THE TEACHING OF THE N.T. RELATIVE TO BAPTISM. YET, I THINK THE EVIDENCE INDICATES THAT THIS IS THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER. IT IS TRUE THAT MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH REALIZE THE NECESSITY OF BAPTISM IN ORDER TO SALVATION, BUT I BELIEVE IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH HAVE DIFFICULTY IN UNDERSTANDING WHY, HAVING RECEIVED N.T. BAPTISM, THEY HAVE NOT DONE A WORK OF MERIT. NOW I KNOW WE CAN RECITE ALL OF THE VERSES, AND WE DO RECITE THEM, WHICH INDICATE THAT WHEN WE HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED WE STILL HAVE NOT LEARNED ANYTHING. BUT WHY IS IT SO? IT DOESN'T MAKE A GREAT DEAL OF DIFFERENCE HOW MANY VERSES WE MAY BE ABLE TO RECITE TO SHOW THAT BAPTISM IS ESSENTIAL AND HAVING RENDERED OBEDIENCE TO THE COMMAND WE HAVEN'T EARNED ANYTHING, IF WE DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY THIS IS TRUE. WE DO NOT HAVE THE UNDERSTANDING WHICH IS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE TO OTHERS THE IMPORTANCE OF N.T. BAPTISM.

IN SPEAKING OF BAPTISM TONIGHT, WE ARE SPEAKING MAINLY OF ITS PURPOSE. IN FACT, WE ARE SPEAKING TONIGHT ALTOGETHER OF ITS PURPOSE. THIS IS NOT TO INDICATE THAT THE ACTION OF BAPTISM OR THE INDIVIDUAL UPON WHOM BAPTISM MAY VALIDLY BE PERFORMED ARE NOT IMPORTANT SUBJECTS, BUT IT IS TO SAY THAT THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM OUGHT NOT TO BE PUT INTO THE SHADE BY THESE DISCUSSIONS AS TO ITS ACTION OR ITS OBJECT. IF THE ACTION OR THE OBJECT OF BAPTISM HAS ANY VALIDITY AT ALL, IT DERIVES THAT VALIDITY FROM THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM. IF IT IS NOT IMPORTANT AS TO THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH WE ARE TO BE BAPTIZED, THEN PERHAPS THOSE WHO SAY THAT THE ACTION IS RATHER IMMATERIAL (IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE WHETHER YOU ARE IMMersed OR HAVE WATER SPRINKLED OR Poured UPON YOU) AND THOSE WHO SAY THAT THOSE UPON WHOM BAPTISM IS TO BE PERFORMED IS IMMATERIAL (WHETHER IT BE AN INFANT OR AN ADULT) ARE CORRECT IN THEIR POSITIONS. IT IS ONLY AS THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM HAS IMPORTANCE THAT THE ACTION AND THE OBJECT HAVE IMPORTANCE.

I THINK WE CAN READILY AGREE THAT THERE MUST BE A PURPOSE TO BAPTISM. WE HAVE HEARD IT SAID (AND I THINK WE ALL BELIEVE IT) THAT CHRISTIANITY IS A REASONABLE FAITH. TO SAY THAT A THING IS REASONABLE IS TO SAY THAT IT FITS INTO AN OVERALL SCHEME OF THINGS, THAT IT HAS A SPECIFIC DESIGN, AND THAT THERE IS A GOOD REASON FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF A SPECIFIC ACT OR THE ACCEPTANCE OF A SPECIFIC FACT. IF CHRISTIANITY IS TO BE A REASONABLE FAITH, THEN BAPTISM MUST HAVE A PURPOSE AND IF CHRISTIANITY IS TO BE A REASONABLE FAITH, THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM MUST RELATE TO THE OVERALL DESIGN OF CHRISTIANITY, AND IF WE ARE TO ACCEPT THE PURPOSE AND DESIGN THEN THESE THINGS MUST BE EXPRESSED TO US. YOU SEE IT WOULD MAKE LITTLE DIFFERENCE FOR BAPTISM TO HAVE A PURPOSE WHICH IS RELATED TO THE OVERALL DESIGN OF GOD IF THE PURPOSE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO GOD'S DESIGN AND GOD'S INTENT WERE STILL RETAINED WITHIN THE MIND OF GOD AND YOU AND I DIDN'T HAVE THE ACCESS TO IT. IF GOD HAD NOT TOLD US WHAT THE PURPOSE WAS, THEN, NOT KNOWING THE PURPOSE, WE COULD CARE LESS WHETHER WE DID OR DID NOT. THEREFORE, IT IS OF THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE WHEN WE TURN TO THE WORD OF GOD AND ASK THE QUESTION, "DOES THE BIBLE SPEAK RELATIVE TO THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM? AND IF SO, WHAT DOES IT SAY?" THE MANY REFERENCES THAT WE FIND RELATIVE TO BAPTISM INDICATE THAT IT IS IMPORTANT IN THE MIND OF GOD. IN THE N.T., WE FIND OVER 100

SPECIFIC ALLUSIONS TO BAPTISM. THIS WOULD INDICATE THAT BAPTISM DOES PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART IN GOD'S SCHEME OF THINGS, AND THAT IT DOES BEAR AN IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP TO GOD'S DESIGN.

NOW THE QUESTION IS, "WHAT IS THAT PURPOSE?" I CAN THINK OF NO BETTER PASSAGE WITH WHICH TO BEGIN OUR DISCUSSION THAN TO TURN TO ACTS 2:38. THIS VERSE TAKES ON ADDED SIGNIFICANCE WHEN WE UNDERSTAND MORE FULLY ITS CONTEXT. IN THE FIRST CHAPTER OF THE BOOK OF ACTS WE HAVE REFERENCE TO THE SCENE WHERE THE GREAT COMMISSION WAS GIVEN. GOING BACK TO MARK'S ACCOUNT OF THE GREAT COMMISSION IN THE 16TH CHAPTER AND THE 16TH VERSE JESUS IN THE GREAT COMMISSION SAID, "HE THAT BELIEVETH, AND IS BAPTIZED, SHALL BE SAVED; BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT, SHALL BE DAMNED." NOW WHEN WE COME TO THE DAY OF PENTECOST WE HEAR THE APOSTLE PETER STANDING BEFORE THE ASSEMBLED MULTITUDE PREACHING THE FIRST GOSPEL SERMON. WHEN THOSE INDIVIDUALS ASKED, "MEN AND BRETHREN, WHAT SHALL WE DO?" PETER GAVE THE ANSWER THAT WE READ IN THE 38TH VERSE. PETER IS SAYING HERE WHAT HE UNDERSTOOD CHRIST TO MEAN WHEN CHRIST IN THE GREAT COMMISSION SAID, "HE THAT BELIEVETH AND IS BAPTIZED, SHALL BE SAVED." WE KNOW THAT WHAT PETER SAYS CONCERNING HIS UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT CHRIST MEANT WHEN HE SAID, "HE THAT BELIEVETH, AND IS BAPTIZED SHALL BE SAVED," IS ACCURATE, BECAUSE IN THIS CHAPTER PETER IS SPEAKING BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. NOW PETER, WHAT DID CHRIST MEAN? WHAT DID YOU SAY UNTO THESE WHO INQUIRED, "MEN AND BRETHREN, WHAT SHALL WE DO?" "THEN PETER SAID UNTO THEM, 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 SPIRIT."

WE WANT TO CENTER OUR ATTENTION ON THE PHRASE, "FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS." IT IS THE EXPRESSION WHICH INDICATES PURPOSE OR DESIGN. NOW IT IS TRUE THAT THE PURPOSE OR THE DESIGN STATED IN THIS PHRASE, "FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS" RELATES JUST AS MUCH TO REPENTANCE AS IT DOES TO BAPTISM, BUT THE FACT THAT IT RELATES JUST AS MUCH TO REPENTANCE AS IT DOES TO BAPTISM DOESN'T MEAN THAT ITS IMPORTANCE TO BAPTISM IS NOT JUST AS GREAT AS IT IS TO REPENTANCE. IF REPENTANCE IS FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS, THEN SO ALSO IS THE BAPTISM. THIS PHRASE IS A PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE INTRODUCED BY THE WORD "FOR." IT INVARIABLY INDICATES PURPOSE OR RESULT. LET ME GIVE YOU SOME ILLUSTRATIONS, SOME EXAMPLES. FIRST, JOHN 18:37. HERE WE FIND JESUS BEFORE PILOT IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE CRUCIFIXION AND PILOT ASKS JESUS A QUESTION, "ART THOU A KING? THEN JESUS ANSWERED, THOU SAYEST THAT I AM A KING. TO THIS END WAS I BORN, AND FOR THIS CAUSE CAME I INTO THE WORLD, THAT I SHOULD BEAR WITNESS UNTO THE TRUTH. EVERY ONE THAT IS OF THE TRUTH HEARETH MY VOICE." NOW A QUESTION--DOES THIS SHOW PURPOSE? DOES THIS SHOW INTENT? DID JESUS COME INTO THE WORLD IN ORDER THAT HE MIGHT BEAR WITNESS TO THE TRUTH OR DID HE COME INTO THE WORLD BECAUSE THAT WITNESS HAD ALREADY BEEN BORN? I SUBMIT TO YOU THAT IF WITNESS HAD ALREADY BEEN BORN TO THAT TRUTH THAT JESUS DID NOT NEED TO COME. HE CAME FOR THE PURPOSE, TO THE END, FOR THE CAUSE THAT HE MIGHT BEAR WITNESS UNTO THE TRUTH. TURN TO ACTS 7:5. HERE STEPHEN IS SPEAKING AND HE SPEAKS OF ABRAHAM AND SAYS, "... HE PROMISED THAT HE WOULD GIVE IT TO HIM FOR A POSSESSION." NOW DID GOD PROMISE TO GIVE ABRAHAM THE LAND OF CANNAN TO THE END, FOR THE PURPOSE THAT ABRAHAM MIGHT POSSESS IT? OR DID HE PROMISE TO GIVE IT BECAUSE ABRAHAM ALREADY POSSESSED IT. I SUBMIT TO YOU THAT IT IS AN IMPOSSIBILITY TO GIVE A MAN SOMETHING THAT HE ALREADY HAS. I CANNOT GIVE YOU SOMETHING THAT YOU ALREADY POSSESS. I CANNOT GIVE YOU SOMETHING THAT YOU ALREADY OWN. IT WAS BECAUSE ABRAHAM DID NOT HAVE IT THAT GOD SAID I WILL GIVE IT, AND HE BROUGHT HIM INTO THE LAND FOR THE PURPOSE, TO THE INTENT IN ORDER THAT HE MIGHT GIVE ABRAHAM THE LAND. LOOK AT ACTS 9:21. WE READ HERE OF SAUL OF TARSUS AND OF HIS COMING TO THE CITY OF DAMASCUS. IT SAYS THAT SAUL "CAME HITHER FOR THAT INTENT, THAT HE MIGHT BRING THEM BOUND UNTO THE CHIEF PRIESTS." NOW WHY DID SAUL GO TO THE CITY OF DAMASCUS? DID HE GO TO THE CITY OF DAMASCUS BECAUSE THE DISCIPLES THERE HAD ALREADY BEEN BOUND AND BECAUSE THEY HAD ALREADY BEEN DELIVERED TO THE CHIEF PRIESTS IN JERUSALEM? OBVIOUSLY NOT, FOR THEN HE WOULD NOT HAVE NEEDED TO GO. HE WENT TO THE CITY OF DAMASCUS FOR THE END, TO THE INTENT, FOR THE PURPOSE THAT HE MIGHT BRING THEM BOUND UNTO JERUSALEM

TURN TO MATTHEW 26:28. JESUS SAID, "FOR THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, WHICH IS SHED FOR MANY FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS." THIS VERSE IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT BECAUSE THE EXPRESSION IN MATTHEW 26:28 IS EXACTLY THE SAME, AS FAR AS LANGUAGE GOES, WITH THAT WHICH WE READ FROM ACTS 2:38, "FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS." JESUS SAID, "THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WHICH IS SHED FOR MANY FOR REMISSION OF SINS." NOW, JESUS WHY DID YOU SHED YOUR BLOOD? DID YOU SHED YOUR BLOOD BECAUSE SIN HAD ALREADY BEEN REMITTED? OR DID YOU SHED YOUR BLOOD IN ORDER THAT, TO THE INTENT, FOR THE PURPOSE THAT SIN MIGHT BE REMITTED BY THAT BLOOD? THE ANSWER IS OBVIOUS. IF JESUS SHED HIS BLOOD BECAUSE SINS ALREADY HAD BEEN REMITTED, THEN THAT MEANS THAT SINS WERE REMITTED WITHOUT THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. IT MEANS THAT SCRIPTURE IS MISTAKEN WHEN IT SAYS THAT THE BLOOD OF BULLS AND GOATS CANNOT TAKE AWAY SINS. THIS EXPRESSION INDICATES TO US THAT THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST, OR IF YOU PREFER TO USE THE EXACT LANGUAGE OF MATTHEW 26:28, THIS PASSAGE INDICATES THAT THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WAS NO MORE CERTAINLY FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS THAN IS THE ACT OF BAPTISM. THE LANGUAGE IS NOT MERELY SIMILAR, THE LANGUAGE IS ABSOLUTELY IDENTICAL.

BUT NOW, LET US NOT MAKE A MISTAKE. LET US NOT ASSUME THAT WHEN WE SAY BAPTISM IS FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS AND THAT THE BLOOD OF THE NEW COVENANT IS FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS THAT BAPTISM AND THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT ARE FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS IS EXACTLY THE SAME SENSE, FOR THIS IS NOT TRUE. BUT WHILE THEY ARE NOT FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS IN EXACTLY THE SAME SENSE, IT IS TRUE THAT THEY ARE BOTH IN SOME SENSE FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS. THIS CANNOT BE DENIED BY ANY INDIVIDUAL WHO KNOWS ANYTHING AT ALL ABOUT THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE OR THE GREEK LANGUAGE EITHER ONE.

NOW, HAVING ESTABLISHED THAT BAPTISM IS FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS IN SOME SENSE, LET'S TURN TO EPHESIANS 4:5 AND THERE, THE CONTEXT SPEAKING OF THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT AND KEEPING IT IN THE BOND OF PEACE, WE FIND DESCRIBED THE SEVEN UNITIES OF THE FAITH. ONE OF THESE UNITIES IS THE STATEMENT, "THERE IS ONE BAPTISM." NOW THIS ONE BAPTISM MUST BE THE BAPTISM THAT PETER PREACHED ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST AS BEING FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS. IN THE BEGINNING OF THIS DISPENSATION, THE APOSTLE PETER BY INSPIRATION STOOD UP AND HE CLEARLY CONNECTED THE BAPTISM OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION WITH THE EXPRESSION, "FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS." THIS SIMPLY MEANS THAT THE ONLY DIVINELY INSTITUTED BAPTISM OF THE NEW COVENANT IS FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS. THIS IS CORROBORATED BY WHAT WE READ IN THE N.T. IT IS CORROBORATED BY THE FACT THAT I CAN TURN THROUGH THE PAGES OF THE N.T., NO ONE IS EVER COMMANDED TO BE BAPTIZED FOR ANYTHING ELSE. YOU NEVER FIND WHERE ANY MAN IN THE N.T. WAS BAPTIZED TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH AND YOU DON'T FIND WHERE ANY MAN WAS BAPTIZED FOR ANY OTHER PURPOSE THAN IN ORDER TO BE SAVED FOR FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS. YOU NEVER FIND WHERE ANYBODY EVER SUBMITTED TO BAPTISM FOR ANY PURPOSE OTHER THAN THE ONE MENTIONED. AND IT IS FURTHER CORROBORATED BY EVERY PASSAGE THAT WE READ WHICH RELATES TO THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM, AND THIS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT. QUITE OFTEN WHEN WE BEGIN TO SPEAK WITH INDIVIDUALS ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM, ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT BAPTISM IS OR IS NOT ESSENTIAL IN ORDER TO BECOME A CHILD OF GOD, THESE INDIVIDUALS ARE WANT TO TURN TO PASSAGES THAT SPEAK OF FAITH AND READ PASSAGES THAT DEAL WITH FAITH. MAY I SUBMIT TO YOU THAT IT ISN'T POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO FIND OUT THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM BY READING PASSAGES THAT SPEAK ABOUT FAITH. IF YOU ARE GOING TO FIND OUT THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM IT ONLY SEEMS REASONABLE THAT WHEN YOU TURN TO THE WORD OF GOD YOU READ A PASSAGE THAT SPEAKS ABOUT BAPTISM. I REMEMBER WHEN I USED TO TEACH 11TH GRADE ENGLISH, AMERICAN LITERATURE, WHEN IT CAME MY TIME TO KEEP A STUDY HALL, I WOULD GO DOWN TO THE LIBRARY AND THE LIBRARIAN WOULD SAY, "WELL, I KNOW WHAT YOU DID TODAY." I DIDN'T KNOW WHETHER TO RUN OR STAND THERE AND TAKE IT LIKE A MAN. IT SOUNDED ALMOST LIKE I WAS IN TROUBLE. BUT I WOULD SAY, "WELL, WHAT HAVE I DONE TODAY?" AND SHE WOULD SAY, "YOU MADE AN ASSIGNMENT ON SUCH-AND-SUCH AN AUTHOR." I WOULD SAY, "HOW DO YOU KNOW?" AND SHE WOULD SAY, "BECAUSE YOUR STUDENTS HAVE BEEN COMING IN HERE ALL DAY ASKING FOR BOOKS ABOUT THIS MAN." THAT'S REASONABLE, ISN'T IT? IF I ASSIGNED A REPORT ON SAY JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER, IT ALWAYS SEEMED REASONABLE THAT WHEN THEY WENT TO THE LIBRARY THEY ASKED FOR A BOOK ABOUT HIM.

WE WOULD THINK THAT A STUDENT WOULD BE DESTINED TO SPEND ANOTHER YEAR IN THE 11TH GRADE IF HE WENT INTO THE LIBRARY AND SAID, "NOW I'VE GOT A REPORT ON WHITTIER, GIVE ME A BOOK ON BROWNING." NOW, IT IS JUST AS RIDICULOUS FOR A PERSON TO TURN TO THE WORD OF GOD TO FIND OUT WHAT BAPTISM IS FOR AND READ ABOUT FAITH. YOU JUST CAN'T GET THERE THAT WAY. IF YOU ARE GOING TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM, YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE TO READ ABOUT BAPTISM, AND EVERY TIME WE FIND IN THE WORD OF GOD A PASSAGE THAT RELATES TO THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM, IT RELATES IT DIRECTLY TO THE REMISSION OF SINS. NOW IT IS TRUE THAT VARIOUS EXPRESSIONS ARE USED TO EXPRESS THIS RELATIONSHIP. SOMETIMES IT SPEAKS OF ONE'S BEING SAVED. SOMETIMES IT SPEAKS OF ONE'S BEING BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST. SOMETIMES IT SPEAKS OF ONE'S BEING BAPTIZED INTO THE DEATH OF CHRIST, BUT ALL OF THESE EXPRESSIONS, VARIED THOUGH THEY MAY BE, STAND FOR ONE THING, AND THAT IS THE REMISSION OF SINS AND THE ADMISSION OF ONE INTO JESUS CHRIST AS ONE OF GOD'S SONS. ROMANS 6:3—"KNOW YE NOT, THAT SO MANY OF US AS WERE BAPTIZED INTO JESUS CHRIST WERE BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH?" THAT TELLS US THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM--IT IS TO GET INTO THE DEATH OF CHRIST. I CORINTHIANS 12:13--"FOR BY ONE SPIRIT ARE WE ALL BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY," THAT TELLS US OF THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM AND IT SAYS IT IS TO GET INTO THE BODY OF CHRIST WHEREIN DWELL THE SAVED. GALATIANS 3:27--"FOR AS MANY OF YOU AS HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST, HAVE PUT ON CHRIST." HERE BAPTISM RELATES TO THE WEARING OF CHRIST AS A CLOAK AND AS A GARMENT, SO THAT WE ARE ROBED NOT IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF OUR OWN, BUT IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD. THAT TELLS US THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM. ACTS 22:16--ANANIAS SAID TO SAUL, "AND NOW, WHY TARRIEST THOU? ARISE, AND BE BAPTIZED, AND WASH AWAY THY SINS, CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD." THAT SPEAKS OF BAPTISM AND ITS PURPOSE, AND IT SAYS IT IS TO WASH AWAY SINS. I PETER 3:21, "THE LIKE FIGURE, WHEREUNTO, EVEN BAPTISM, DOETH ALSO NOW SAVE US, (NOT THE PUTTING AWAY OF THE FILTH OF THE FLESH, (IT'S NOT JUST THE OUTWARD WASHING OF THE BODY) BUT THE ANSWER OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE TOWARD GOD) BY THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST," PETER, WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM? PETER SAID, "IT IS TO SAVE US." NOW, EITHER YOU BELIEVE THAT TONIGHT OR YOU DON'T. AND IF YOU BELIEVE ACCORDING TO THE STATEMENT OF PETER THAT BAPTISM SAVES US, THEN MY NEXT QUESTION TO YOU IS THIS, "FROM WHAT DOES IT SAVE US?" THERE IS JUST ONE THING IN THE BIBLE THAT WE ARE TO BE SAVED FROM. IT MAKES LITTLE DIFFERENCE WHETHER YOU SAY "SAVED FROM SIN," "THE RESULTS OF SIN," OR "THE ETERNAL PUNISHMENT OF SIN." IT ALL AMOUNTS TO AND IS INVOLVED IN EXACTLY THE SAME THING. PETER IS SAYING THAT BAPTISM SAVES US FROM SIN, BAPTISM IS FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS.

BUT REMEMBER THAT THUS FAR WE HAVE ONLY ESTABLISHED THAT BAPTISM IS FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS IN SOME SENSE. NOW, THE IMPORTANT QUESTION IS THIS, "IN WHAT SENSE IS BAPTISM FOR REMISSION OF SINS?" IT IS INTERESTING TO TURN IN THE WORD OF GOD TO FIND ALL OF THE VARIOUS THINGS TO WHICH OUR SALVATION, OUR JUSTIFICATION, IS ATTRIBUTED. IT IS ATTRIBUTED TO CHRIST, THE NAME OF CHRIST, THE DEATH OF CHRIST, THE BLOOD OF CHRIST, TO FAITH, REPENTANCE, AND BAPTISM. BUT ALL OF THESE THINGS DO NOT SAVE US IN THE SAME SENSE. ALL OF THESE THINGS DO NOT RELATE TO OUR SALVATION IN EXACTLY THE SAME WAY.

IN WHAT SENSE THEN DOES BAPTISM SAVE US? MAY I SUGGEST THAT BAPTISM IS NOT THE ORIGINAL OR THE MOVING CAUSE OF OUR SALVATION. THERE IS JUST ONE ORIGINAL, THERE IS JUST ONE MOVING CAUSE OF SALVATION AND THAT IS THE LOVE OF GOD EXPRESSED IN HIS UNSPEAKABLE GRACE WHICH CAUSED HIM TO GIVE JESUS CHRIST, WHICH MOVED HIM TO HAVE COMPASSION UPON US. IF WE TRACE OUR SALVATION BACK TO THE ORIGINAL OR THE MOVING CAUSE, THEN WE MUST GO DIRECTLY TO THE GRACE OF GOD.

MAY I SUGGEST THAT BAPTISM IS NOT THE MERITORIOUS CAUSE. WE DON'T EARN ANYTHING. WE DON'T PLACE GOD UNDER ANY OBLIGATION BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN IMMersed IN WATER. PERHAPS WE OUGHT TO MAKE THIS A SPECIAL SERMON IN AND OF ITSELF, AND ONE TO THE BRETHREN. I VERILY BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE SOME OF MY BRETHREN WHO HAVE COME ALMOST TO BELIEVE, IF NOT COMPLETELY TO BELIEVE, THAT A BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATE IS THE KEY TO UNLOCK THE DOORS TO HEAVEN AND THAT IF I'VE BEEN IMMersed, IF I'VE BEEN BAPTIZED, I HAVE PLACED GOD UNDER AN ETERNAL

OBLIGATION AND HE CANNOT SAY ME NO IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT. BUT THAT IS NOT TRUE. YOU HAVEN'T PLACED GOD UNDER ANY OBLIGATION AND GOD CAN, AND WITH THAT ATTITUDE GOD MAY WELL, SAY YOU NO IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT. IT IS BECAUSE OF THAT ATTITUDE THAT SO MANY OF MY BRETHREN ARE PRONE TO SEEK TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF GOD AND TO FEEL THAT IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE HOW THEY LIVE, WHAT THEY DO, OR WHAT THEY DON'T DO—EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE ALRIGHT IN THE AFTER WHILE. BUT MARK DOWN TONIGHT, HERE AND NOW, THAT SUCH IS NOT THE CASE. BAPTISM IS NOT THE MERITORIOUS CAUSE. IF YOU WANT TO TRACE YOUR SALVATION BACK TO THE MERITORIOUS CAUSE, YOU GO BACK TO THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST, FOR IT AND IT ALONE IS THE MERITORIOUS. IT IS THE PURCHASING CAUSE IN THE EYES OF GOD.

BAPTISM IS NOT THE DISPOSING CAUSE. YOU DIDN'T WANT TO BE SAVED BECAUSE YOU WERE BAPTIZED. YOU WERE BAPTIZED BECAUSE YOU WANTED TO BE SAVED. FAITH AND REPENTANCE MAY BE LOOKED UPON AS THE DISPOSING CAUSES OF SALVATION.

WHAT KIND OF CAUSE, THEN, IS BAPTISM? BAPTISM MAY BE LOOKED UPON AS AN INSTRUMENTAL CAUSE. IT IS A MEANS TO AN END. BAPTISM MAY BE LOOKED UPON AS A CONCURRENT CAUSE FOR IT IS IN THE ACT OF BAPTISM THAT FAITH IS CONSUMMATED, THAT FAITH IS MADE PERFECT, AND THAT GOD SAVES ONE BY HIS GRACE. YOU SEE, THE QUESTION IS NOT WHETHER FAITH SAVES, IT IS WHEN FAITH SAVES. TO PUT IT MORE ACCURATELY, THE QUESTION IS NOT, "DOES FAITH SAVE?" THE QUESTION IS, "WHAT KIND OF FAITH IS GOING TO SAVE MAN?" FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS NO MORE FAITH THAN A CORPSE IS LIVING WITHOUT A SPIRIT. THAT IS WHAT JAMES SAID IN JAMES 2. "FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS NO MORE FAITH THAN A CORPSE WITHOUT A SPIRIT IS A LIVING MAN," BAPTISM IS A MEANS OF FAITH. BAPTISM IS FAITH EXPRESSED. BAPTISM IS NOT, HAS NEVER BEEN, AND CAN NEVER BE, A GOOD WORK. BY ITS VERY NATURE IT CANNOT BE. GOOD WORKS HAVE OUR BRETHREN OR THOSE WHO ARE NOT OUR BRETHREN WHO ARE IN SITUATIONS OF NEED AS THEIR OBJECT. GOD IS NOT THE OBJECT OF GOOD WORKS. WE OURSELVES ARE NOT THE OBJECT OF GOOD WORKS. BAPTISM CANNOT BE CLASSIFIED AS A GOOD WORK. ALL THIS IS NOT TO MENTION THE FACT THAT IN BAPTISM ONE IS PASSIVE IN EVERYTHING EXCEPT HIS CONSENT.

INFLUENCE WHICH BAPTISM MAY HAVE UPON OUR SPIRITUAL RELATIONS IS THEREFORE NOT BECAUSE OF ANY MERIT IN THE ACT AS OUR OWN. IT IS NOT AS THE PROCURING CAUSE. IT IS NOT THE ORIGINAL CAUSE. IT IS NOT AS THE MERITORIOUS CAUSE. IT IS NOT AS THE DISPOSING CAUSE. IT IS AS AN INSTRUMENTAL CAUSE IN WHICH FAITH IS DEVELOPED, IN WHICH THE FRUIT OF FAITH IS BORN, AND WHEN FAITH IS PERFECTED IN THIS WAY, THEN THAT FAITH BECOMES EFFECTUAL IN AFFECTING OUR SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIPS AND OUR SPIRITUAL STATE WITH JESUS CHRIST. ONE REASON THAT SO MANY PEOPLE HAVE SO MUCH DIFFICULTY IN ACCEPTING WHAT IS TAUGHT FROM OUR PULPITS RELATIVE TO BAPTISM IS BECAUSE WE HAVE SEEMED TO SAY THAT BAPTISM PER SE, IN AND OF ITSELF, THE ACT ALONE, AFFECTS ONE'S SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIPS AND BRINGS ONE INTO JESUS CHRIST. PERHAPS WE HAVE NOT INTENDED TO DIVORCE IT FROM FAITH. PERHAPS WE SO WELL UNDERSTOOD IN OUR OWN MIND THAT IT WAS THE EXPRESSION, THE CONSUMMATION, AND THE PERFECTION OF FAITH, THAT WE ASSUMED EVERYBODY ELSE UNDERSTOOD IT TOO. THEY HAVEN'T UNDERSTOOD IT, AND THEY HAVE GONE AWAY SHAKING THEIR HEADS WONDERING HOW ANYBODY COULD LOOK UPON SUCH AN ACT AS DOING SO MUCH. BAPTISM MUST NOT BE IN OUR MINDS OR IN THE MINDS OF OTHERS SEPERATED FROM FAITH. BAPTISM IS NO WORK OF THE LAW. BAPTISM IS NO MORAL DUTY. BAPTISM IS NO MORAL RIGHTEOUSNESS. BAPTISM, ACCORDING TO THE N.T., IS THE SIMPLE PUTTING ON OF CHRIST AND THE PLACING OF OURSELVES WHOLLY IN HIS HAND AND COMPLETELY UNDER HIS GUIDANCE. IT IS AN OPEN, IT IS A SENSIBLE, IT IS A VOLUNTARY EXPRESSION OF OUR FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST. BAPTISM IS AN EMBODIMENT OF FAITH TO WHICH, BEING THUS PERFECTED, THE PROMISE OF THE REMISSION OF SINS IS FINALLY ANNEXED BY THE HEAVENLY FATHER. THUS, WHEN PAUL WROTE TO THE CORINTHIAN BRETHREN TO SPEAK OF THE BLESSINGS OF CHRISTIANITY, HE SAID "YOU ARE WASHED, YOU ARE SANCTIFIED, YOU ARE JUSTIFIED, IN THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS AND BY THE SPIRIT OF OUR LORD." THE APOSTLE PAUL RELATES SANCTIFICATION, JUSTIFICATION AND ADOPTION, THE THREE GREATEST BLESSINGS THAT ARE HELD OUT TO US IN THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION, FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, AND BAPTISM INTO HIS DEATH. BAPTISM WITHOUT FAITH IS OF NO VALUE WHATEVER, FOR IN TRUTH, PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD, BAPTISM IS BUT THE ACTUAL AND SYMBOLIC EXPRESSION OF OUR FAITH. BAPTISM IS THE LEGITIMATE EMBODIMENT OF FAITH. IT IS THE LEGITIMATE CONSUMMATION OF FAITH. WHATEVER

VIRTUE THERE MAY BE IN IT OR CONNECTED WITH IT, IT FLOWS FROM ONE THING AND ONE THING ALONE, AND THAT IS FAITH IN THE BLOOD OF CHRIST APPLIED TO THE CONSCIENCE AND TO THE HEART OF MAN. THIS IS THE PURPOSE OF BAPTISM AS EXPRESSED IN THE N.T.

WE MENTIONED IN THE OUTSET OF OUR LESSON THAT WE DID NOT SPEAK CONCERNING ITS ACTION AND ITS OBJECTS, BUT YET THE LESSON WOULD NOT BE COMPLETE WITHOUT A BRIEF MENTION OF THESE TWO THINGS. WE MUST BEGIN WITH A PURPOSE FOR IF THE PURPOSE IS NOT IMPORTANT, WHO CARES ABOUT THE ACTION AND THE OBJECTS. BUT WHEN YOU COME TO SEE THAT BAPTISM IS RELATED TO THE REMISSION OF SINS AND THAT IT IS THE INSTRUMENTAL OR THE CONCURRING CAUSE WHEREIN FAITH IS PERFECTED AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST APPLIED, THEN YOU SEE THE ACTION OF BAPTISM TAKES ON SUPREME IMPORTANCE AND ONE WANTS TO DO IT JUST EXACTLY AS THE BIBLE DIRECTS THAT IT BE DONE. WE NEED NOT RECITE THE MULTIPLIED VERSES FOR THERE ARE BUT VERY FEW PEOPLE WHO FAIL TO REALIZE THAT BAPTISM IN THE N.T. WAS AN IMMERSION IN WATER. IT'S DESCRIBED AS A BURIAL. THE TRANSLATION OF THE WORD "BAPTIDSO" SHOULD BE RENDERED AS IMMERSED, PLUNGED BENEATH, OVERWHELMED. THESE UNITE TO PROCLAIM THAT VALID BAPTISM IS IMMERSION. WHEN ONE REALIZES THAT BAPTISM IS BUT THE CONSUMMATION, THE EXPRESSION, THE EMBODIMENT OF FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST AND HIS ATONING BLOOD, THEN ONE IMMEDIATELY COMES TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE OBJECT OF BAPTISM, THE INDIVIDUAL UPON WHOM IT IS TO BE DONE, WHO IS TO BE BAPTIZED, CANNOT BE AN INFANT. WHAT FAITH CAN AN INFANT HAVE IN THE ATONING BLOOD OF THE SON OF GOD?

HAVE YOU BEEN BAPTIZED ACCORDING TO THE TEACHING OF THE N.T.? HAVE YOU BEEN BURIED IN WATER, BORN OF WATER, AND THE SPIRIT? AS PAUL EXPRESSED IT IN ROMANS 5, "TO BE RAISED THEREFROM TO WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE," THAT BEING FILLED WITH THE VERY SPIRIT OF GOD, YOU MIGHT GO FORTH AS GOD'S CHILD, ADOPTED INTO HIS FAMILY WITH ALL OF THE BLESSINGS THAT HEAVEN CAN BESTOW UPON A SON FALLING RICHLY UPON YOUR HEAD TO SUSTAIN YOU IN LIFE AND TO STAND YOU AT LAST WITH THE SAINTS OF THE AGES IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD FOREVER AND FOREVER. WOULD YOU COME TONIGHT TO BE BORN AGAIN? IF YOU HAVE DONE THAT AND HAVE WANDERED AWAY, WILL YOU RETURN TO THE LIFE THAT YOU HAVE LEFT? IF YOU WOULD BE IDENTIFIED, WOULD YOU COME WHILE WE STAND AND SING?