

You Have Been Baptized What is it That You Have Done?

Heb 12:18-24

- 18 For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind,
19 and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them.
20 For they could not bear the command, "IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED."
21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, " I AM FULL OF FEAR and trembling."
22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,
23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,
24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. NASU

So often we do things in the church and in the name of Christianity without fully comprehending all that is involved in what we are doing. My hope today is to give you a brief course on all that you have taken upon yourself and give you some encouragement going forward.

Baptism is an odd thing if one looks at it outside of the history of Christianity. What does this ritual dunking of a person have to do with anything at all? Does it mean anything, and, if so, what?

In all reality we have just celebrated with imagery the most incredible cleansing that has ever or will ever take place.

When you stepped out of the shower this morning, were you clean? Were you absolutely, perfectly clean? If you had suddenly and mysteriously passed away and the CSI types had been called to figure out what had happened, would they have found anything other than a perfectly clean body? Well, we know they would have found something, that we are never absolutely clean, only mostly so, sometimes.

But you are celebrating a cleansing after which nothing at all will be found... ever.

1 Cor 6:9-11

- 9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,
10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.
11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are

justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. KJV

Here the apostle was contrasting the previous life of these Christians at Corinth with their present life. They had been living lives contaminated by rebellion against God and His Laws but something has happened, something so remarkable that even the best minds of the Christian faith have marveled at it.

“But ye are washed” Here the intention is to describe something which has changed the status of each person under consideration from one that would never in a million years dream of setting foot in the eternal Kingdom of God to people so clean that entrance would never be forbidden them.

Each of you who have been converted by the Grace of God has been cleansed so thoroughly that you are accepted in the Presence of the Living God Who accepts nothing but absolute purity.

You have heard people say, “God accepts you just as your are.” Maybe you have heard it many times, but the truth is that the statement as it stands is about as profound an untruth as could ever be uttered. The text we just read says as much. God only accepts purity, cleanness, holiness. Corruption and rebellion are condemned and rejected by Him. The scriptures says that “God is angry with the wicked every day.” It is preposterous to think that God would accept the ungodly and the unholy.

There was a ceremony in Ancient Israel which taught this quite plainly. Once a year on the great Day of Atonement, one and only one person, the Jewish High Priest, was allowed to enter the innermost room of the Temple and see a manifestation of the Glory of God, which signified His Presence and acceptance of the man and of the nation. On this day the High Priest would offer a sacrifice for the whole nation and then present the blood from the sacrifice before God in the Holy of Holies. There was a very elaborate preparation made for this man to be clean when he went into the Temple. The worshiping Jews were always terrified that the man would not be accepted, that the offering would be rejected and the judgment of God would fall upon them. The man wore bells on the bottom of his robe and was required to continually move around behind the veil so that the people would know he was OK. Additionally, they would tie a rope about one of his ankles so that he could be dragged out from the outside in case God did not accept him but rather took his life.

The idea was that only a person carefully and properly prepared could appear before God and not be judged by Him. This principle has always been in play and continues to be. God demands holiness in His Presence, absolute cleansing from sin... or He rejects the one who approaches Him.

Those of you who have come in faith and repentance to the baptistry have been cleansed... not by baptism but by the Work of Christ. This is the reason that Jesus came, to make it possible for people to be cleansed so as to be received and accepted by God.

How does He cleanse a sinner? By creating a union between Himself and you so complete and full that your sins actually became His. As preposterous as this sounds, it is exactly what the

apostles said.

Peter said:

1 Peter 2:24

24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. KJV

And Paul agreed:

2 Cor 5:21

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. KJV

Every bit of our sin was taken by Christ...nothing was left out... and you were cleansed by His death so completely that sin can never stain you in the eyes of God... ever again.

He cleansed us by paying the penalty of our sins to the fullest and in a perfect way. He placed himself under the judgment of God for us and satisfied the demands of the Holy God.

Isaiah the prophet said as much:

Isa 53:11

11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. KJV

Imagine a shower or a bath so complete that you would never need to take one, ever again.

Baptism can never do what Christ did...make us so absolutely free of guilt that we could step out of this life and into the Presence of God without anything else being done to us to prepare us for His Presence.

2 Cor 5:6-8

6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. KJV

So, what has happened? ***You have been cleansed!***

But that is not all.

You have joined a family, a community, a Temple, a nation, you have become a priest as well as nobility. You have joined history and have become a part of the future.

With all privilege comes also responsibility... the greater the privilege, the greater the responsibility.

The life that Jesus has purchased and given to you has one goal to which all other duties and

goals must be lesser in importance. The one main aim of this new life is that you should glorify God in this life and in eternity.

You honor Him now by being holy, by discovering for yourself what First Century Christianity was and is and then by living it out before God as an act of worship... you reasonable service given all that He has done for you.

Rom 12:1

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. KJV

He has not called you to discover a new kind of Christianity but to live that which He placed in the world and has preserved through time until now.

You have joined a family of people who have massive realities in common.

Every one of them began life as a sinner and a rebel against God but at some point God interrupted their lives and revealed Himself to them through the Work of His Son and by the Agency of His Holy Spirit.

They all, these family members, have in common the fact that they each have repented of their sins and believed with all their heart in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every one of them loves God and loves the people of God. They love you and you are called to love them back.

1 John 3:23

23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. KJV

There is not a single true member of this great family who does not love you, whether they have ever seen you or not.

Each of them loves the Word of God and seeks to find in them instructions for life and a pattern to follow.

2 Tim 3:16-17

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. NASU

That goes for the lady who belongs to God as well.

And, every one of the members of this family is committed to endure and be faithful in following Christ to the very end of their lives, no matter what.

Matt 10:22

22 And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. KJV

Matt 24:12-13

12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. KJV

You have joined a Community that reaches around the world and even into the heavens, that special abode of God Himself.

Remember the verses with which we began?

Heb 12

22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,

23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. NASU

No matter where you go, if you find True Christians there, you will have found friends who can be trusted, who will love and support you as you serve the Lord.

It is a Community bound together by some remarkable principles.

The Gospel as proclaimed by the apostles.

Gal 1:8-9

8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. KJV

The Community of saints, by definition, is committed to the original gospel message and no other. Where you find people with a different gospel, walk away, they are not your friends.

A serious and sincerer commitment to turn away from the wickedness of this world to a life of kindness, love, holiness and self-sacrifice.

Gal 5:19-25

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

- 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.
24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.
25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. KJV

The are devoted to unity within the confines of godliness and truth.

Eph 4:1-3

- 1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. KJV

You are warned to stay away from those not committed to Christian unity.

Titus 3:10-11

- 10 If anyone is causing divisions among you, he should be given a first and second warning. After that have nothing more to do with him,
11 for such a person has a wrong sense of values. He is sinning, and he knows it.
TLB

This community has a purpose to follow as closely as possible the examples of the apostles and the First Century church.

2 Thess 3:6-7

- 6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.
7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; KJV

You have been made a part of a very Great Temple.

It will be the eternal dwelling place of God with His people.

Rev 21:1-3

- 1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.
2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. KJV

The building blocks of this Temple, the 'stones' if you will, are the people of God, and you have

joined them.

1 Peter 2:5

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. KJV

1 Peter 2:5

5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. NASU

But, unlike the Jewish Temple where on the High Priest had access to the inner sanctum, all of God's people, including you, have access now and will have it eternally.

There will be no animal sacrifices at them temple, on the sacrifices of praise and worship to God. There is an ongoing, continual, reminder of the Great Sacrifice that made it possible for God and humans who trust Him to live and abide together.

And... in that Temple... you will be a priest. More on that in a moment.

You have become citizens of a nation... the nation that God promised would come from Abraham.

You will recall that Abraham was given an amazing promise.

Gen 15:1-6

1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

2 And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

4 And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness. KJV

But Paul revealed that there was a commonly misunderstood element in this promise.

Gal 3:16

16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. KJV

He went on to explain that all those who have been brought into union with Christ are beneficiaries of that promise to Abraham.

Gal 3:27-29

- 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.
29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. KJV

You are the children of Abraham by faith and citizens of the Israel of God. We do not have time to go into here but there are two Israel's, the physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob and those who have been brought into union with Jesus Christ by faith.

This nation, unlike any other, is only populated by those of Royal Blood. There is one King but all of the inhabitants are themselves princes.

1 Peter 2:9

- 9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: KJV

A priesthood of royalty, that is what you have joined.

You have joined history.

Even though our modern culture prefers to say that this is 2018 A.C.E. instead of A.D., one need only ask what year '0' is to expose the reality. The Central Figure of history - the most influential person of all time - is Jesus Christ.

He is the reason the world exists at all and His brief visit to our plane is the focal point of all of God's revelation to humanity.

And, the end moment of time as we know it will be the Revelation of Jesus Christ from heaven as He comes again to finally and permanently rescues His people as well as put an end to all rebellion against His Deity.

He has organized it all and He will end it all.

By His Enabling Power - otherwise known as Grace - you have believed on Him and have joined Him in His Great Work.

And you have joined the future.

Who knows that lies ahead for the people of God?

If we look only at what is going on today in Western Cultures we might think that Christianity is in for very difficult days and that may well be true.

There is very little Christian influence today in Europe and Great Britain, places that we once

areas of Great Revivals and Reformation. America seems to be headed in the same direction.

But the Lord Himself, the One you have trusted for your salvation, promised that spiritual darkness would not prevail against His Work.

Matt 16:18

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. KJV

Christianity is going to survive and you are now a part of that, whatever comes.

My sincere prayer and hope is that we of this generation can leave you a revived and thriving church, but if God sees fit not to hear us, we pray that He will send an Awakening in your generation. If He does, only He knows what blessings there will be for you in the future.

So,

you have joined a family,

you have joined a community, a nation, a temple, a priesthood, as well as royalty.

Long story short, you have joined the Church of Jesus Christ, may He bless and keep you faithful and spiritually prosperous all the days of your lives.