

Becoming A Roma Disciple of Jesus

By Bob Hitching

Part Three

Baptism

1. Baptism as a Symbol

Mark 16:16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

One of the most wonderful experiences a Christian can have in their life is their Baptism. Our Baptism is that event where we have followed the Lord Jesus in obedience to His command to be baptised that He has given in the Bible. Let us look at what it really means.

Illustration

My mother was a member of the British communist party and my father was a member of a communist union. My family never went to Church and our home was a home without any spiritual influences for the truth. My father was so opposed to Church all his life that when my mother died he refused to go into the Church for

the funeral. Despite all this I was still Baptised as a baby. The Priest lifted me up for everyone to see and then he poured a little water on me and blessed me. Afterwards all the men in the family went out to drink beer to celebrate. When I was a teenager I put my trust in Jesus Christ to save me from my sins. Shortly afterwards I was baptized but this time it represented something very different. It was a symbol of my commitment to Jesus. It was a message to my family and friends that I was now following Jesus.

- Being baptized by the Priest did not and could not save me from my sins.
- When I trusted Jesus Christ to forgive me of my sin and asked Him to take over my life I was as saved as it is possible to be saved.
- Baptism is what Christians have done through out history to publicly show that they have turned to Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

Acts 2:21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be **saved.**'

It is very important to understand these points as there is so much confusion about this today. **Baptism can not save me but Baptism is a symbol that I am saved.** Interestingly, even though our Baptism is public and done in front of other people it's symbolism is in many ways to help us personally to understand what we have done by following Christ.

Lets is look at four things that Baptism symbolises:

- A. Life
- B. Death
- C. Burial
- D. Resurrection

A wonderful passage of scripture that describes this whole process in

Romans 6

3 when we became Christians and were baptized to become one with Christ Jesus, we died with him? ⁴ For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

⁵ Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised as he was. ⁶ Our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. ⁷ For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin. ⁸ And since we died with Christ, we know we will also share his new life. ⁹ We are sure of this because Christ rose from the dead, and he will never die again. Death no longer has any power over him. ¹⁰ He died once to defeat sin, and now he lives for the glory of God. ¹¹ So you should consider yourselves dead to sin and able to live for the glory of God through Christ Jesus.

It seems a little complicated when you when first read it so lets go through it one step at a time. Ask God to open your eyes and your heart as you read.

A. Life

John 4:14 but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Jesus said that He came to the world so that we who trusted in Him would have life and have life abundantly. Water is often a symbol of life in the Bible. It is also a picture of being washed and made clean. Our sins have been washed away. Our lives have been washed from the past. We have been given the fresh water of life.

B. Death

Romans 6:3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

When we are baptised we go down into the water and the person baptising us then gently takes us and immerses us under the water. This represents our dying. It is like being let down in a coffin into the ground. This is very interesting symbolism. When we become a Christian by putting our trust in the Lord Jesus to forgive us our sins, the Bible says our old life dies. It is also a picture of when the Lord Jesus died he went down into death. So going down into the water is picture of dying.

C. **Burial**

Colossians 2:12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

When a person dies they go down into the ground and they are covered up or in other words they stay in the ground. When going under the water and we are there just for a second, it is a picture of our spiritual burial. Lets us look for a minute what is buried when we become a Christian :

(i) The Past with all its sins

(ii) Our Sin nature

It is not the just sins we commit that is our problem it is that we are sinners. Our most natural reactions in life are not to do good but to be sinful. So when we come to Christ He forgives all of our past sins but He also makes us a new person. **That is why the Bible says that we have become a new creation when we come to Christ.**

D. **Resurrection**

Colossians 2:12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

Of course the wonderful news is that when Jesus died and went into the grave He stayed there just a short time and then He rose from the dead

again. It is the same with us. We will all die one day and when we do, it will be with the truth comforting us that we will rise again. When we go down into the water and then come up again from the water then it is a picture or a symbol of the resurrection.

So let us look at this again. The water represents life. Life is all around us when we step into the water to be Baptised. We go down into the water which represents death and then we are under the water which represents burial. When we come up out of the water it represents the resurrection.

Let us look at the same again but in a slightly different way:

- I am a sinner but God has chosen to give me life.
- I deserve to die because of my sin but Jesus died in my place.
- My sins and my sin nature is what always causes me to be separated from God but God says when Jesus was buried my sins and my nature were buried with Him.
- I deserve to die and stay dead but Jesus rose from the dead and He will raise me from the dead one day in the future.

Baptism is a picture or a symbol of all of these wonderful truths.

" Baptism can not save me but when I am saved Baptism is a public picture of what has taken place in my life"

2 Baptism as a Statement

In the second point on Baptism we will look at how Baptism speaks to the world around us.

Illustration.

One day I was sitting in a home in a village talking with some people. They were sharing from their hearts that there was a big problem in the village. They said that every Friday night after we had our Church service in a persons home the Christian family there would begin to argue loudly with the husband shouting at his wife and children. Everyone in the village knew that the Christians had their meeting on Friday night and that afterwards the Christians would argue and shout at each other.

Our greatest problem in Roma communities is that we have Christian words but not Christian lives. That is why Baptism is so important to be a statement that is true and not just a religious ceremony.

Let me try to explain a little more.

Illustration.

When I became a Christian it was very dramatic. I was known for being very "non- Christian" by my friends and the people who knew of me and the life I was leading. I knew without anyone telling me that because I had become a Christian I would need to make a statement to my friends that I would not be able any longer to live in the way that I did. I stood up in front of a group of my friends and told them that I was now a Christian. At first there was the shock of disbelief and then people began to laugh at me. This is very important to think about. The truth is that most people at first

will reject us, mock us and even oppose us for making the decision to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

When we are Baptised we are making a statement publicly that we are no longer the same person that we were and that now we are followers of the Lord Jesus. We make that statement to Five places :

- A. Family
- B. Friends
- C. Our Bosses
- D. The people who work for us
- E. The watching world

A. Family

The people who watch us the most closely are our families. It is our families who know who we really are and what we are really like. The hardest group of people we can ever tell that we have become a Christian is our families. Baptism is a way of making a statement to our families in ways that we may not be able to in our conversation. It is hard to accept this but often our families will become our enemies because we have followed the Lord Jesus.

When a husband and father becomes a Christian he is saying to his wife that he will never hit her again and if he does it is sin that makes God angry that needs forgiveness. When a wife becomes a Christian she is saying to her husband and children that she is going to be faithful to them and do what is good in the home. When children become Christians they are saying to their parents that they will be respectful and obedient to them.

When we are Baptised we are telling our families we are following Jesus now.

B. Friends

Another group that it is hard to make a statement to about becoming a Christian is our friends. For many of us our friends rejected us because we followed Jesus. It is a powerful testimony to the Lord to invite our friends to our Baptism. We are telling our friends by our Baptism that we are no longer going to do the things we once did and that we belong now to Jesus.

C. Our Bosses

When we become a Christian our whole attitude towards the people we work for changes. We no longer want to steal from them or cheat them but we want to work hard and be honest. When we are Baptised it makes a statement to our bosses that we are different. This is because the people we work with are a little like our family in that they see us all the time.

D. People who work for us

When a person becomes a Christian it means that they will treat the people under them with a new respect. It means those who work for us we will now treat with fairness and respect.

E. The Watching World

As Christians we are always being watched. We are watched especially in our villages. If we make a statement that we are Christians, people will be looking at us even more. They will listen to see if there are arguments coming from our homes. They will watch to see if we get drunk. They will watch to see if we have stolen some windows or doors. They will want to know if we are still receiving money from the Social as well as working on the black. When we are Baptised we are telling our village that we are now followers of Jesus and that it means something very important in our lives. Baptism is a way of telling the world that we are no longer who we were and we have become a new creation. It is something we need to consider very seriously when make the decision to be baptised.

" Seeing someone Baptised is the only connection that many people will ever have with the Gospel"

3 Baptism as Obedience

1 John 2 - 3 We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. **4** The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. **5** But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him:

The wonderful truth about being a Christian is that God has so clearly stated in the Bible that we can not earn our salvation by doing good works. If it was

based on this we would all be lost. Being a Christian is a gift from God. It is He who forgives us our sins and calls us His children. There is though with this gift a great responsibility. The responsibility is that we have to be obedient to the commands of the Bible. If we really have become Christians we will want to obey the Bible. It does not mean we will not make mistakes, have failures, sin and do things we are ashamed of. It does mean that we keep coming back to God and telling Him we are willing to be obedient to Him no matter what it means. This is not easy. It is though fundamental to walking with Jesus. If we want to claim to be Christian we are to be obedient to what Jesus has declared in the Bible.

Baptism is something that is very clear in the Bible and we have been commanded to be baptised if we have become a Christian. Let us look at this more closely and look at Three areas:

- A. Jesus was Baptised as an example to us
- B. Baptism is commanded because we are tell the world we belong to Jesus
- C. Being Baptised is a test of our love for Christ

A. The Baptism of Jesus

Luke 3:21-23 When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened **22**and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Jesus was Baptised in the River Jordan by John the Baptist. We read about the story in the Gospels in the New Testament. There are some important things to notice about this Baptism.

Jesus was baptised as an example. He was without sin and needed nothing in terms of His standing before God the Father. He was baptised as an example for us to follow. Jesus never asks us to do anything that He has not already done. When we are Baptised we are following the example of Jesus. As well as following the example of Jesus there are certain things about the Baptism of Jesus that are important to see.

(i) Jesus could have baptised Himself but he was humble and allowed John to Baptise Him. When we come to Baptism we come humbly not with pride. We come with humility and acknowledge that we are unworthy of being a Christian but filled with joy that God has chosen us to be His children.

(ii) When Jesus came out of the water the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. After His baptism it was the Holy Spirit that lead Jesus into the desert to pray and to be tempted by Satan. When we are Baptised we need to understand that we will often be tempted in deep ways by Satan. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that we are able to stand against the temptation.

(iii) After Jesus came up from the water the heaven opened and God the Father spoke from heaven and said "This is my beloved son I am pleased with Him" When we are baptised it makes the father pleased that we are being obedient.

B. Telling The World

Another part of the obedience to the command to be baptised is that God desires people tell other people that they are Christians. When we are Baptised we are telling the world we belong to Christ. It is the will of God that we allow ourselves to be seen publicly connecting ourselves to Jesus Christ. For some people this is the hardest part of following Christ. Jesus makes it so clear that if we are ashamed of Him He will be ashamed of us in front of His father on the day of Judgment.

C. A test of Our Love for Christ

"John 14:15 If you love me, you will obey what I command.

Jesus says so many times in the Bible that if we love Him we will obey his commands. This is so important to understand. The relationship that we have been born again into when we become a Christian is the relationship of family. Other Christians are our brothers and sisters. God is our Father. We are part of the worldwide family of God. All true relationships which are good are based on love. We serve God not because we are afraid of His anger but because we have been drawn into His love. Our Baptism is or first big test to see if we really love Him. If we Love Him we will obey His commandments.

" Jesus said that if I love Him then I will obey Him. He has told me to be Baptised and so because I love Him I will obey Him"

4 Baptism and the spirit world

Baptism is very closely connected to the spirit world. To be Baptised is actually a very spiritual experience. There are several areas for us to think about when it comes to this issue.

- A. Renouncing the Works of the Devil
- B. Declaring before the spirit world we have changed Kingdoms
- C. Baptism as remembrance when we are in spiritual warfare

A. Renouncing the Works of the Devil

Acts 26:18

to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

When we come to Christ we come as people who have lived lives that have often been connected to the works of Satan. Palm reading, spells, witchcraft healing, fortune telling and many other areas that are from the world of darkness.

We may have renounced all these when we became a Christian. I led a young man to Christ once who had been all wrapped up with demons and the day he was converted we went to his house and got all his occult charms and burnt them and then renounced the works of Satan. Sometimes it is when we come to our Baptism that we make it clear to the powers of darkness, that is the demons and Satan that we want nothing more to do with his works and

we renounce them. We are publicly stating that we no longer want to be a part of those works of darkness that we have been involved in, in the past. Some people actually experience a wonderful sense of breaking free from those things that are dark when they publicly declare that they renounce them.

In some ways it is actually a good test to see if we really have become a Christian when we are able to raise our voice and say that we renounce the works of Satan.

B. Declaring before the spirit world we have changed Kingdoms

Colossians 1:13 - For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,

The Bible says that when we become a Christian we get transferred from the Kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God. Before we became Christians Satan and sin were the King of our lives. We had no power to resist sin we had no power to be anything other than servants of sin. We belonged to and were members of the Kingdom of darkness.

When we became Christians Jesus declared that we were now His. We belonged to Him. He was our Lord and He was our King. We were transferred to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

When we are Baptised we are making a statement to the demons that we no longer belong to their kingdom and that we now are members of another Kingdom, the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

C. Baptism as remembrance when we are in spiritual warfare

When a person becomes a Christian they will be attacked by Satan. The most common way that we as Christians are attacked is in the area of being condemned. Satan will remind us of all the things that we did wrong before we were Christians and he will remind us of all the failures we have made after we have become Christians. The remembrance of these sins can often discourage us and cause us to be defeated in our Christian lives with a sense of condemnation and unworthiness always around us. At these times we can remember our baptism and remember all that it means to us. We are discouraged because of our sin and so remember that when we were baptised we were:

- Symbolically dying and being raised again - nothing Satan can do can change that fact.
- We were chosen by God not because of our goodness but because Jesus Christ was good in our place.
- We remember the fact that we renounced all the works of Satan.
- We remember that we have been adopted into a new Kingdom, the kingdom of Jesus Christ.
- We remember that our Baptism is obedience in love to Jesus Christ.

" If you start thinking about those wonderful truths in your mind when you are discouraged then very quickly the condemnation of Satan will flee from you"