

**Christian Students @ SAC
Bible Study - Spring 2022
Week 2**

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Chapter 5

THE DIVIDE OF THE CROSS

(2)

Scripture Reading: Rom.6:3-4; Mark 16:16; Gal. 6:14; 1 Pet. 3:20-21

Rom. 6:3 Or are you ignorant that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?

Rom. 6:4 We have been buried therefore with Him through baptism into His death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life.

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

Gal. 6:14 But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

1 Pet. 3:20 Who had formerly disobeyed when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared; [entering] into which, a few, that is, eight souls, were brought safely through by water.

1 Pet. 3:21 Which [water,] as the antitype, also now saves you, [that is,] baptism, not a putting away of the filth of the flesh but the appeal of a good conscience unto God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Burial Means An End

Peter goes on now to describe baptism in the passage just quoted as “the answer of a good conscience toward God” (1 Peter 3:21 A.V.). Now we cannot answer without being spoken to. If God had said nothing we should have no need to answer. But He has spoken; He has spoken to us by the Cross. By it He has told of His judgment of us, of the world, of the old creation and of the old kingdom. The Cross is not only Christ's personally -- an “individual” Cross. It is an all inclusive Cross, a “corporate” Cross, a Cross that includes you and me. God has put us all into His Son, and crucified us in Him. In the last Adam He has wiped out all that was of the first Adam.

What is my answer to God's verdict on the old creation? I answer by asking for baptism. Why? In Romans 6:4 Paul explains that baptism means burial: “We were buried therefore with him through baptism.” Baptism is of course connected with both death and resurrection, though in itself it is neither death nor resurrection: it is burial. But who qualifies for burial? Only the dead! So if I ask for baptism I proclaim myself dead and fit only for the grave.

Alas, some have been taught to look on burial as a *means* to death; they try to die by getting themselves buried! Let me say emphatically that, unless our eyes have been opened by God to see that we have died in Christ and been buried with Him, we have no right to be baptized. The reason we step down into the water is that we have recognized that in God's sight we have *already* died. It is to that that we testify. God's question is clear and simple. “Christ has died, and I have included you there. Now, what are you going to say to that?” What is my answer? “Lord, I believe You have done the crucifying. I say Yes to the death and to the burial to which You have committed me.” He has consigned me to death and the grave; by my request for baptism I give public assent to that fact.

In China a woman lost her husband, but, becoming deranged by her loss, she flatly refused to have him buried. Day after day for a fortnight he lay in the house. “No,” she said, “he is not dead; I talk with him every night.” She was unwilling to have him buried because, poor woman, she did not believe him to be dead. When are we willing to bury our dear ones? Only when we are absolutely sure that they have passed away. While there is the tiniest hope that they are alive we will never bury them. So when will I ask for baptism? When I see that God's way is perfect and that I deserved to die, and when I truly believe that God has already crucified me. Once I am fully persuaded that, before God, I am quite dead, then I apply for baptism. I say, “Praise God, I am dead! Lord, You have slain me; now get me buried!”

In China we have two emergency Services, a “Red Cross” and a “Blue Cross” The first deals with those who are wounded in battle but are still alive, to bring them succor and healing; the second deals with those who are already dead in famine, flood or war, to give them burial. God's dealings with us in the Cross of Christ are more drastic than those of the ‘Red Cross’. He

does not set out to patch up the old creation. By Him even the still living are condemned to death and to burial, that they may be raised again to new life. God has done the work of crucifixion so that now we are counted among the dead; but we must accept this and submit to the work of the “Blue Cross,” by sealing that death with “burial.”

There is an old world and a new world, and between the two there is a tomb. God has already crucified me, but I must consent to be consigned to the tomb. My baptism confirms God's sentence, passed upon me in the Cross of His Son. It affirms that I am cut off from the old world and belong now to the new. So baptism is no small thing. It means for me a definite conscious break with the old way of life. This is the meaning of Romans 6:2: “We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?” Paul says, in effect, “If you would continue in the old world, why be baptized? You should never have been baptized if you meant to live on in the old realm.” When once we see this, we clear the ground for the new creation by our assent to the burial of the old.

In Romans 6:5, still writing to those who “were baptized” (verse 3), Paul speaks of our being “united with him by the likeness of his death.” For by baptism we acknowledge in a future that God has wrought an intimate union between ourselves and Christ in this matter of death and resurrection. One day I was seeking to emphasize this truth to a Christian brother. We happened to be drinking tea together, so I took a lump of sugar and stirred it into my tea. A couple of minutes later I asked, “Can you tell me where the sugar is now, and where the tea?” “No,” he said, “you have put them together and the one has become lost in the other; they cannot now be separated.” It was a simple illustration, but it helped him to see the intimacy and the finality of our union with Christ in death. It is God that has put us there, and God's acts cannot be reversed.

What, in fact, does this union imply? The real meaning behind baptism is that in the Cross we were “baptized” into the historic death of Christ, so that His death became ours. Our death and His became then so closely identified that it is impossible to divide between them. It is to this historic “baptism” -- this God-wrought union with Him -- that we assent when we go down into the water. Our public testimony in baptism today is our admission that the death of Christ two thousand years ago was a mighty all-inclusive death, mighty enough and all-inclusive enough to carry away in it and bring to an end everything in us that is not of God.

Questions

1. What is baptism?
2. Why do you need to get baptized?