

5. The budded rod of Aaron represents risen Christ. Explain.
(Please note: The book entitled. The Tabernacle, written in Malayalam by Mahakavi K.V. Simon is recommended for additional reading)

LESSON - 21

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

Reading : Matt.28:18-20; John 3: 22-23

Memory verse : Mark 16:16

Theme : To learn that all those who are born again through faith in Jesus Christ must obey the commandment of God and be baptized by immersion in water in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Introduction: What is church? How does one become a member of the Church? Which are the commandments concerning this matter? Baptism is the public testimony of a person about his experience of conversion. Baptism is accepted by all Christians in one form or the other except by Salvation Army and the quakers. Let us study this important topic on the basis of the scriptures.

The word, 'BAPTISM': The word used in the original Greek is "Baptidso" and in Aramaic (Chaldean Syrian), it is "Mammodeesa". The meanings are respectively "immersion" and "immersion bath". There are two important rituals given to the church by Christ himself: Baptism and Lord's Table, Of these, the first and important ritual is baptism.

Why baptism? : According to the Scriptures, a person must identify himself with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We must experience that in our hearts. The same experience is publicly proclaimed by baptism (Col.2:12;Gal 3:27). It is the justice of God that man who is born from Adam with the nature of sin should get the punishment of death. Man receive remission of sin through faith in Christ Jesus and receives life from God. Hence he dies to sin. He is buried with Christ in baptism. He rises from under the

water into a new life in Christ just as Christ came out of the grave (Rom. 6:3-6). He also receives a good conscience towards God (1 Pet. 3:21). Is it possible to enter the kingdom of God without obeying His commandments?

When did baptism begin?: Baptism was started by John, son of Zacharia the priest. Hence he is referred to as John the Baptist. The idea did not originate in the imagination of John. On the other hand, John initiated baptism by the counsel, will and ordination from God (John 1:33, Luke 7:30). That is the reason why even Jesus Christ submitted Himself to be baptized by John so that the righteousness of God might be fulfilled. Later the Lord Himself baptized His own disciples (John 4:1). Moreover, Jesus commanded His disciples before His resurrection to teach, make disciples and baptize (Matt. 28:18,19). Baptism was an important practice in the early church (Acts 2:41).

To sum up baptism is the counsel of God ordained by God commandment of Jesus Christ, doctrine of the apostles and practice of the first century church. No person who has received salvation through Christ can avoid baptism.

How is baptism performed?: John the Baptist and the Apostles show us the method of giving baptism (Mtt.3:6; 3:16). When people came to him for baptism, John would immerse them in River Jordan. We read that Jesus came out of the water. When there was less water in Bethabara, John shifted the venue to Aenon where there was much water (John 1:28; 3:23). When the finance minister (a eunuch) of the Ethiopian queen was to be baptized, the chariot was stopped near water. Both Philip and the eunuch went into the water and Philip baptized the eunuch. If baptism could be done by sprinkling of water, that could have been done in the chariot itself. There fore we can understand that immersion was the practice followed in the early church by the apostles.

The Greek word "Baptidso" and the Syriac word "Mamodeesa" means "to immerse". Baptism is to be done in the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost (Matt.28:19).

Who is given baptism? Baptism should be given only to a person who believe that Christ died for his sins, repents about his sins and receives pardon for them and thus becomes a child of

God. Word of God allows baptism only to those who confess their faith. It is the irrevocable command of God. Make a list of people who are given baptism in the following references: Luke 3:3, John 4:1 Mark 16:16; Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:12; 8:37; Matt.3:6; Acts 10: 47-48 19:1-4. Write below the list and definition in one sentence of a person who is to be baptized.

There need not be any delay for a believer from being baptized. 3000 people who heard Peter on the day of Pentecost and believed were baptized immediately. The household of Cornelius, the jailer and family and the Ethiopian eunuch were baptized immediately. If you have accepted Jesus as your Saviour, there should not be any delay in taking baptism.

Does baptism give remission of sins? The only way of salvation is faith in Jesus Christ, Jesus came to this world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). There is no other way provided to man for his salvation. Jesus forgave the sins of all those who came to Him. He did not advise them to be baptized for the remission of their sins. Had child baptism as practiced by Episcopal churches been enough for the salvation of a child. There was no need for the godfather to confess on behalf of the child that he is leaving Satan and accepting Messiah. Is this not a clear evidence to show that baptism is to be given to those who have confessed their sins? The process of rebirth happens through the gospel not through baptism (1 Cor. 4:15). The primary need is to be saved. There is no use if an unsaved person is baptized. On the other hand, a saved person must take baptism.

QUESTIONS

1. Give equivalent words in other languages for 'baptism' and their meanings?
2. Why baptism is required? When was it started? Make short note on baptism
3. Describe whom baptism is to be given. Give references.
4. Prove that baptism does not give remission of sins.
5. Describe the method of giving baptism to a person.