

PULPIT NOTES

By Mel Martin

Bright Angel Church of Christ

8570 Bright Angel Way, Las Vegas, NV 89149

March 20, 2016

Sunday Evening

CIRCUMCISION AND BAPTISM – One Is Resisted, One Is Advocated

This lesson is based upon the following two propositions which pertain to determining what teachings and practices are **true** and **are to be accepted** by the New Testament church, and what teachings and practices are **false** and **are not to be accepted** by the New Testament church:

(1) **Proposition One** – The Apostles taught beliefs and practices which were true that should be accepted by the New Testament church.

(2) **Proposition Two** – The Apostles refuted (condemned) beliefs and practices which were false and that should not be accepted by the New Testament church.

For this lesson, consider the following two first century teachings and practices and determine whether the New Testament church should accept either of them, neither of them, or both of them.

(1) **Teaching One** – You must be circumcised to be saved.

(2) **Teaching Two** – You must be baptized to be saved.

- I. **TEACHING ONE – IN THE FIRST CENTURY MEN TAUGHT THAT CIRCUMCISION WAS NECESSARY FOR SALVATION.** Acts 15:1 “And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, *and said*, **Except ye be circumcised** after the manner of Moses, **ye cannot be saved.**”
 - A. **YET, UNDER THE NEW COVENANT, NEITHER JESUS NOR THE APOSTLES TAUGHT THAT WE MUST BE CIRCUMCISED TO BE SAVED.**
 1. Circumcision is **mentioned over and over** in the Bible, but who among us believes that we must be circumcised in order to be saved? If we do not believe that circumcision is necessary for salvation, why is it that we do not believe that it is necessary? I know that Jesus said, “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” but did Jesus, or the Apostles, ever say “he that believeth and is **circumcised** shall be saved?”
 2. Circumcision is not important to us for the Apostles did not teach, “in order to be saved we must be circumcised.” The Apostles did not teach it because they were to teach “them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20), and Jesus **never commanded** any of his disciples to go and circumcise anyone whom they taught.
 3. The careful Bible student today observes that **circumcision is not necessary for salvation** because the inspired men of the New Testament never told anyone that in order to have the blessings of salvation that they had to be circumcised. **You cannot believe a teaching that does not exist.**
 4. Clearly, circumcision is taught in the Bible, but it is neither taught that “you must be circumcised to be saved,” nor is it taught “now that you have become a Christian you must be circumcised.” **Circumcision, though a Biblical topic, is not a teaching related to a Christian’s salvation.**
 - B. **FURTHERMORE, THOUGH MANY TAUGHT CONCERNING THE NECESSITY OF CIRCUMCISION FOR SALVATION, THEIR TEACHING WAS RESISTED BY THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST.** As we read our New Testaments, we find many places where the apostles **confronted** those who were trying to interject the command to be circumcised into the

teachings of Christianity.

1. Acts 15:1 "And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, *and said*, **Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.**"
2. Acts 15:5 "But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That **it was needful to circumcise them**, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses."
3. Acts 15:19 "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:"
4. Acts 15:24 "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye must* be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom **we gave no such commandment:**"
5. Galatians 2:3 "But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:"
6. Galatians 5:2 "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that **if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.** 3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law."
7. Galatians 6:12 "As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ."
8. The careful Bible student today observes that the teaching the necessity of circumcision for the remission of sins was strongly refuted (rejected) by the Apostles and therefore is not to be accepted by the New Testament church.

II. TEACHING TWO – IN THE FIRST CENTURY MEN TAUGHT THAT BAPTISM WAS NECESSARY FOR SALVATION. Mark 16:16 ". . . he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

A. UNDER THE NEW COVENANT JESUS TAUGHT THAT WE MUST BE BAPTIZED TO BE SAVED.

1. Unlike circumcision, **baptism** is taught over and over again that it **/S associated with our salvation.**
 - a. If baptism has nothing to do with my ~~salvation~~, why does the Bible have so many statements which would lead the general Bible student to conclude otherwise?
 - b. It seems as if God could have made it clearer that baptism is not necessary for salvation as he did with circumcision, or simply not say anything about baptism at all.
 - c. Baptism is mentioned over and over again in association with salvation.
 - d. As a matter of fact, every time Baptism and Salvation are mentioned in the same passage, **salvation always follows baptism.**
2. The fact that God does speak about baptism, and the fact that there are so many passages that **directly teach**, and **necessarily infer**, that baptism has significance when it comes to man's salvation, makes it so that the general Bible student either has to ignore, overlook, and disregard all that is said, or be resigned to the arduous task of explaining why seemingly **clear statements** about baptism do not say what they appear to be saying.
3. It seems as if every time baptism is mentioned, it is associated, one way or another, with something that has to do either with the **blood of Jesus**, the **death of Jesus**, the **body of Jesus**, being **raised with Jesus**, being **children of God**, **remission of sins**, being **saved**, being **cleansed**, **washing away of sins** and the like.
 - a. Acts 2:38 "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 Ghost."
 - b. 1 Peter 3:21 "The like figure whereunto *even* **baptism doth also now save us** (not

- the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:"
- c. Acts 22:16 "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and **be baptized, and wash away thy sins**, calling on the name of the Lord."
 - d. Mark 16:16 "He that believeth and is **baptized shall be saved**; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - e. Galatians 3:26 "For ye are all the **children of God** by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you **as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.**"
4. If God wanted to teach that baptism is not for the remission of sins, God has surely **confused what he wanted to teach** about baptism **with all that he has taught** about baptism. God has surely confused the issued with all his teaching on baptism being associated with salvation if his intention was to teach that baptism is not essential!
- a. If God meant to teach that baptism was not essential, simply saying, "baptism is not essential for salvation," **even one time**, would have made his intention a lot clearer.
 - b. **If God can make it clear that circumcision is not associated with salvation, surely, he can also make it just as clear that baptism is not associated with salvation**, if it is his teaching that baptism is not associated with salvation.
5. **INSTEAD OF CLEARLY TEACHING THAT BAPTISM IS NOT ESSENTIAL, WHAT HAS GOD DONE?**
- a. Through God's Son, He has told the Apostles to go out and preach the gospel telling them, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).
 - b. Then, in the Book of Acts, God has given us example after example of the Apostles following Christ's command to preach and teach baptism, and thousands obeying the teaching and being baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38).
 - c. In doing this, God has made it hard for the typical, ordinary Bible student to believe that baptism is not associated with salvation.
 - (1) Having both a **direct statement** ("he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved") and **apostolic example** (Acts 2 – 3,000 being baptized for the remission of their sins), the typical, rational, Bible student is **forced into believing** that **baptism is associated with salvation**, even if he cannot explain the association.
 - (2) You would need help not to believe in baptism for remission of sins.
- B. **IF THE TEACHING OF THE NECESSITY OF BAPTISM FOR SALVATION IS A FALSE DOCTRINE, WHERE IS THE TEACHING RESISTED BY THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST?**
1. Basically put, it just seems like a doctrine that was widely **believed**, openly **taught** and **practiced by thousands**, if false, would have been resisted by someone, anyone. The doctrine of the necessity of circumcision was resisted, **but where is the resistance against the doctrine of the necessity of baptism?**
 2. Paul fought against those who would require **one man**, Titus (Gal 2:3), to be circumcised. Where is the fight against those who would have **thousands** to be baptized?
 3. What we find, however, is that those who fought so ardently against circumcision are **the very same ones** who adamantly taught that one must be baptized.
 4. What might we reasonably conclude from this? Is it not reasonable to conclude that the early disciples understood that **baptism was necessary** and *must be practiced*, but that **circumcision was not necessary** and *must be resisted*?
 5. Baptism was not the big scourge against the church, circumcision was. The teaching of the necessity of circumcision was a teaching which incited much strife in the early church. Paul never rebuked any teachers in any congregation who taught baptism.