

# SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER    ISA. 55: 10    FOR THE EATER  
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

## THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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# IDENTIFICATION WITH JESUS CHRIST

Of all the "baptisms" set forth in Scripture there is none as important as the one declared in Romans 6:3. If *baptizo* were translated in this passage we would find Paul setting forth the fact that he and many others were identified with Jesus Christ. This was a blessed reality which was based upon a positive declaration made by Jesus Christ Himself when He said: **"Whosoever shall be avowing Me before men, him will I also be avowing before My Father Who is in Heaven"** (Matt. 10:33).

The word "avow" here (since it is used with "before men") implies open and emphatic declaration even in the face of opposition. If ever a man did this, it was Paul. Before the seeking Savior stopped him in his tracks on the Damascus road, he had vigorously disavowed any relationship to Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 26:9-12). There was no ceremony connected with these disavowals. They were his way of life. After the Lord Jesus appeared to Him, the character and purpose of His life changed. He became a man identified with Jesus Christ. There was no ceremony connected with this new relationship. It simply became his way of life.

No one but Paul knew of this relationship until God revealed it to a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias (Acts 9:10-16). This man was sent (*apostel/commissioned*) by God to the house of Judas in Damascus where Paul had been living and praying for three days, blinded by the light he had seen on the Damascus road. This was the start of Paul's public identification.

Many will insist that there was a ritual or ceremony connected with Paul's identification with the Lord Jesus. With this I am inclined to agree. However, let it be known and noted by all who read these lines that the man who performed this ritual (whatever it was) was deputized by Jesus Christ to do this very thing. Truly, Ananias

was a mediator between God and Paul. The ceremony he performed had meaning and it resulted in a reality which was Paul's identification with Jesus Christ. This was the Acts period when God-given rituals performed by God-commissioned men brought positive results. Thus it was that Paul could speak in his Roman letter of being identified with, even merged with the Lord Jesus Christ. This, as said at the start, is the paramount baptism of all Scripture. This is the "one baptism" set forth in Ephesians 4:5.

At this point it will be good if all seekers for God's truth concerning baptism will give careful consideration to the differences between ritual baptism and real baptism as set forth in the epistles that pertain to the Acts period. In determining the things that carry through, it is the ritual that must be left behind and it is the reality that remains as truth for this dispensation of grace. Nevertheless, in practice Christendom has fixed the ritual as being truth for today while the reality is ignored and disregarded.

All will agree that there was a God-given ritual practiced in the Acts period. This was called identifying, or baptizing, by those who used the *Koine* Greek. When the Israelites went out into the wilderness to John the Baptist, we are told that they were baptized of him in Jordan. This was the ritual called baptism, and since it was performed by a man commissioned and authorized by God, it resulted in producing men who were by avowal submissive to God. John's act identified them with those professedly submissive to God, and it signified before God an irrevocable step which when taken committed them to a course of action which could result in serious consequences if they failed to follow it through. They were not putting themselves under grace when they submitted to the demands of God's government.

In Romans 6:3 we read of being "**baptized into Christ,**" a truth repeated in Galatians 3:27. These passages speak of something far more exalted than the ritual. They speak of a blessed reality, a real baptism, which very few today know anything about or care anything about.

All who have read the Bible will know that in the divine religion that God gave to Israel there was a ritual called "circumcision," but there was also a reality called "circumcision," spoken of in Deu. 30:6 where Moses said: "**And the Lord God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart.**" See also Jer. 4:4 and Deu. 10:16. Paul sets forth both the ritual of circumcision and the reality in Romans 2:28, 29.

As it was with circumcision, even so it was with baptism in the Acts period. As one reads the first four gospels, the Acts, and the epistles written during the Acts period (1 and 2 Thess., 1 and 2 Cor., GaL, Rom.), every time he comes upon the word *baptism*, he must determine whether the passage speaks of ritual baptism or real baptism.

The context will usually help in determining this. For example, the idea that it might mean the water ritual in Acts 2:38 is impossible. Peter has charged these men with responsibility for the crucifixion and murder of the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:23). Therefore, in view of the magnitude of their sins, even to have been dipped in a river of water would have done less for them than one drop of perfume would do for deoderizing a skunk. They were told to submit and to identify themselves with the name of Jesus Christ with a view to the remission of their sins.

If a man needs a pound of butter he should with money in hand tenuously identify himself (as a customer) for a few minutes with a store that handles this commodity. If he does this with the end in view of obtaining what he needs, it will be forthcoming. Even so if a man is a sinner and needs forgiveness, let Him identify himself with the Savior of sinners with the end in view of obtaining the forgiveness he needs and it will be forthcoming. The Lord Jesus dispenses forgiveness. With Him is forgiveness. Keep the water out of Acts 2:38.

As a pertinent illustration let us consider the institution which is called "marriage." There is a ritual called "marriage" and there is a reality called "marriage." I am quite familiar with both of these, having performed quite a few marriages (the ceremony) and will soon be celebrating the fifty-ninth year of our own marriage (the reality). No matter how elaborate a marriage ceremony may be, it cannot insure that a marriage (the reality) will be the result. Many a girl wants to be the leading lady and play the part of a lovely bride in a marriage ceremony, but when she faces the hard facts of the reality of marriage, she wants no part of it. If two people become "one flesh," as God had expressed it, it will be because they have worked hard to accomplish this. It will never be the result of a ceremony.

Even so it is with baptism. There is in Scripture a ritual called baptism. It was called this because the Greek word *baptisma* had developed to the place where it signified identification, one that amounted to a merger and proclaimed a relationship. Those, in Scripture, who submitted to this ritual were identified and merged with whatever relationship the ceremony was supposed to bring forth. John was a baptizer, and each time he performed this ceremony it resulted in someone becoming identified with the submissive ones in Israel. As already said, this was no insignificant thing. Inasmuch as God was involved in it, it became the most serious step that any Israelite had ever taken. Let any such one fail to yield when God made His demands known and that man would feel the displeasure of God. Any man who put his hand to the plow and then turned back when he discovered that the furrow was long, hard, and rocky, that man demonstrated that he was unworthy of a place or portion in the kingdom of God (Luke 9:62).

Of course we who believe today are not interested in becoming identified and merged with the submissive ones in Israel. Even if we were, there is no "baptizer" anywhere today who under God could perform a meaningful ceremony. We are interested in our identification with Jesus Christ, and there is no ceremony related to this. It is entirely a matter of faith since we live in a dispensation of God which operates entirely in and by faith. As to our identification with Christ, we take God at His word and think accordingly. For example, the Colossian epistle was written to believers in Jesus Christ (1:2). I am one of these. They became believers upon the basis of hearing the word of truth (1 :5,9). So did I. Paul declares that they were "complete in Him" and were "buried with Him in baptism" (2:10, 12) So am I, and I want no other baptism but this. I am identified with Jesus Christ. Please believe this and don't try to find out what else I am identified with, or belong to, or what someone did or I did to make this a reality. It is real to me, even as He is real to me.

In Romans 6:3 Paul declares that as many as are (not were - are) identified with Jesus Christ are identified with His death. The first brings about the second. There is a Negro spiritual which asks the question: "Were you there when they crucified the Lord?" My answer to this is - Yes, I was there. God has identified me with His death for our sins. There are many in Christendom today who profess identification with Christ but deny the vicarious nature of his death, making it to be nothing more than a man giving up his life for his convictions. Christ died for our sins in harmony with the Scriptures. He was also buried, and rose again the third day (1 Cor. 15:3,4). Being identified with Him, we are also identified with His death, burial, and resurrection. If anyone should ask to see our "Certificate of Identification" we will show him God's Word.

**End Issue No. SB139**