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Our Baptist Heritage According to New Testament Doctrines

Quarterly Aim: By the conclusion of this quarter the students will discuss and trace the history of Baptist churches back to the time of Christ by New Testament doctrines.

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Baptist Heritage and the Founder of the Lord's Churches

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will list reasons why Jesus founded His New Testament church during His personal ministry.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Matthew 4:18-22.

Background Scripture: Matthew 16:16-18; Luke 6:12-19; 10:1-12; John 1:35-51; Ephesians 5:21-30; Colossians 1:18.

Devotional Reading: Glory in the Church, Ephesians 3:21.

Introduction

This quarterly discusses a matter of great importance to New Testament churches. In recent years, many Baptists have decided they are nothing more than the latest of the Protestant religions. In doing this they have divorced themselves from two thousand years of history. This practice has separated them from their roots and has made them nothing more than a religion of the world. Where do conservative Baptists stand in relation to the formation of the church?

True Baptists have always stood for Jesus' starting His church during His earthly, personal ministry. This is an important matter. To have the church start even on the day of Pentecost would mean that the church did not begin at the hand of Jesus Christ. For it to be the Lord's church, He must have personally founded it. This lesson will give biblical evidence of the early beginning of the New Testament churches. That formation began the long and wonderful heritage of Baptists.

1. _____ The Call
The New Testament word for church describes what a church really is. It means "a called out assembly." It could have been

translated congregation and retained the original idea. The word always means a group of people who have been called out for a specific purpose. When did the Lord call out His church?

The Text described Jesus walking by the shores of the Sea of Galilee. He passed the fishing vessel of Peter and Andrew. These two men had previously met the Lord when John the Baptist proclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1:36). Andrew heard those words and found his brother, Peter. Later Jesus approached them while they were doing their work. "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). Immediately they left their occupation and followed Jesus.

Near to them was the fishing business of Zebedee. Jesus spoke to his sons, James and John. They were busy in their occupation; yet, when Jesus called them, they also left their occupation and followed Him. These four men formed the nucleus of the first New Testament church. Others would soon follow.

Philip and Nathanael came to know who the Lord was. His direct call to them is not given in the biblical record, but we know they became disciples. Matthew, or Levi, was a tax collector. His occupation could produce great wealth. Jesus called him out to do His work. Once again we have a person immediately leaving his occupation and following the Lord.

From this early, humble beginning has come almost two thousand years of churches. Each scriptural church can trace its doctrinal heritage to Jesus. This long and storied history can breathe new life into churches today.

2. _____ The Commission

The Lord has a work for His churches to accomplish. It began with the first church and has continued down for all history. What is the purpose of a church (Matt. 28:19, 20)?

A church must reach out to the lost. Even during His earthly ministry, Jesus sent out seventy disciples in groups of two. They were sent to prepare the people to accept the Lord (Luke 10:1). They prepared for the harvest to come. Churches still have the responsibility to prepare people to receive the Lord as Savior. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). People can only be won to the Lord through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul said, "It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). Preaching the gospel is a vital part of the work of a church.

A church must baptize those who are saved. When Jesus prepared to begin His earthly ministry, He submitted to baptism. God receives honor and glory through His churches (Eph. 3:21). A person must have scriptural baptism in order to be a member of a scriptural church.

A church must educate its new members. Too many churches only want to stress the first two parts of the commission. They love to report professions of faith and baptisms. The education of the membership is much more difficult to measure; yet, it is as vital to the spiritual health of a church. A church must teach its membership how to live for Jesus.

The three sections of the Great Commission can be summed up in three words. A church is to evangelize, baptize and stabilize. If a church fails in one of these points, it has failed in its work.

3. _____ The Company of Saints
When the Lord established His church, He created an organization with a unique character. That character reveals the relationship between Christ and His church.

The Bible describes this relationship. "And he [Jesus Christ] is the head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18). "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church" (Eph. 5:23). Could your body maintain existence without the head to direct its activities? In the same way, a church could never exist without its head. Some churches have decided to neglect the directions the Lord gave. Jesus warned about this in His message to the church at Ephesus. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Rev. 2:5). When churches leave the Lord, He will fight against them and will remove His authority from their existence. Jesus is the head of a New Testament church and each church must willingly submit to this proper leadership.

The Bible also describes the emotional relationship between Christ and a church. "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). When Paul was persecuting the early churches, Jesus came to him on the road to Damascus. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4). Paul had not directly persecuted the Lord. Jesus so identified with His

churches that an act against a church was an act against Him. Because of His great love, churches should submit to His every desire (Eph. 5:24). For a church to be successful in its work, it must willingly place itself in the proper position under the leadership of Christ. A church will do this when it fully loves and respects the Lord.

A church's relationship with Christ is one of dependence. "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). A church simply does not have to worry about what is yet to come. The Lord has promised to care for His churches. Every church should be dependent on the Lord.

3. _____ The Continuance

The Lord has promised that He would watch over His churches for all time. Jesus once asked what His disciples thought of Him. Peter responded that they believed He was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. That answer came from God. Jesus encouraged them by saying: "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). This was a promise that Christ would protect His churches for all time. Has He fulfilled this promise?

Early in its history, the church at Jerusalem faced trying times. Almost as soon as the Lord ascended to the Father, this church began facing persecution. Saul bitterly hated Christianity and did his best to stamp it out. Those who claimed to know Jesus as Savior were tried and often executed. When Paul was saved, others arose to take his place. Churches were persecuted from all sides; yet, through it all, the Lord stood by His churches. The Dark Ages came and persecution escalated. It has been estimated that as many as fifty million Christians died as martyrs because they would not forsake the Lord. When it seemed that no churches existed anywhere, the Lord maintained the faith upon the earth. Even in those dark days, the Lord preserved His churches.

The Lord will always keep His promises. When He declared that the gates of hell would not prevail against one of His churches, He meant exactly that. Though it seems at times that Satan is winning the battle against the true churches, rest

assured that the Lord is in control. The gates of hell will never prevail. God will win!

Conclusion

What is the significance of the formation of the early churches? Why is it important that the Lord personally organized the first church? If the church began after the ascension of the Lord, then it is not His church. If His church went out of existence or was corrupted for generations, then the Lord is not dependable and none of His promises are secure. We do not have to worry about the future. The Lord loves and cares for His churches and will continue to protect them as He has for almost two thousand years.

Baptist Heritage and the Doctrine of Creation

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will give scriptural proof that God is the Creator of the universe.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Genesis 1:1-3.
Background Scripture: Genesis 5:1, 2; Isaiah 42:5; 45:8, 12-18; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:10, 11.
Devotional Reading: By the Word of His Power, Hebrews 1:3.

Introduction

A matter of great importance for all history has been the origin of the universe. Even in times of antiquity, people wanted to know where the world came from. The ancient Babylonians had an epic poem about Bel and the dragon. It supposedly told how they thought the world came into existence. Almost every society has derived some idea of the origin of all things.

The Bible begins with a simple statement: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." In one brief statement God had the wisdom to combat much of the opposition to His existence and His ability to create all things. We can rely on His wisdom.

This lesson will focus on the fact of creation. It will begin by briefly explaining the three primary concepts concerning the origin of all things. This will also give some information disproving the false ideas of origin. Then this lesson will examine the creation and the manner by which God brought the world

into existence. Finally, it will show why a belief in biblical creationism is important.

1. _____ Perceptions About the
Origin of Things

How did the universe come into existence? There are many different ideas as to the origin of the universe. They can be condensed into three primary ideas that will be discussed in this part.

Atheistic Evolution. Atheistic evolution is widely accepted among secular scientists today. It is the belief that everything in existence found its most primitive origin in what they term the Big Bang. According to this theory, all the mass of the universe was at some point in the distant past (possibly twenty to thirty billion years ago) a single mass. In an instant of time, that mass exploded and began the process of forming the universe now in existence. Slowly the bits of exploded matter began forming solar systems. The earth and all it contains would have begun in this manner.

Are there any problems with this theory? One of the problems concerning this accidental formation of life comes in the formation of the building blocks of life. It takes four hundred ten amino acids to form an individual protein molecule. The smallest possible living cell requires at least two hundred thirty-nine individual protein molecules. The probability of the accidental formation of one protein molecule is one to the one hundred and twenty-third power. (That is one followed by one hundred and twenty-three zeros.) To form a living cell, this would have to happen two hundred and thirty-eight more times. The possibility of this happening could be represented by a one followed by 29,345 zeros. Sir Fred Hoyle (scientific astronomer and former evolutionist) calculated the possibility of life forming on earth as one in ten to the forty thousandth power.

Theistic Evolution. This theory is the belief that the universe evolved as the atheistic evolutionist says. The theistic evolutionist claims that God started the process of evolution. This is an insulting concept of the omnipotent, omniscient God. The problems with theistic evolution are the same as that of atheistic evolution.

Creationism. This is the belief that God brought all things into existence as the Bible claims. Nothing just happened into

existence. God determined the need for life as found on the earth. This was God's plan and He carried it out perfectly.

Each person chooses his belief concerning the origin of the universe. Those who believe in evolution must accept by faith that the fanciful ideas are correct. They are unproven, simply accepted. This is true whether the evolutionist is an atheist or believes in God. The creationist also must accept the principles of the origin of the universe by faith. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3). Will you deny God and accept the unbiblical principles of evolution, or will you accept the Bible as the Word of God and accept creationism?

2. _____ Pattern of Creation

Did God have a set pattern for creation? This section will not discuss the order of creation. The student can study that by reading Genesis 1:1-31. Instead, we will discuss some practical matters concerning the creation.

How did God create all things? The Bible declares that "the worlds were framed by the word of God" (Heb. 11:3). Word refers to a spoken word or command. God brought all things into existence by His spoken word. The first chapter of Genesis bears this out. "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). The same formula introduced each segment of creation. God spoke the world into existence.

God created all things suddenly. "I did them suddenly, and they came to pass" (Isa. 48:3). In the Genesis account of creation, God worked by days. Some think those days refer to ages. Day refers to a twenty-four hour day. He also worked specifically. The world was created for the purpose of being inhabited (Isa. 45:18). It was not just a formless mass that took millions of years to form into an inhabitable world. It was done suddenly and specifically.

When did God create all things? This is like asking how long the world has existed. The evolutionist claims the world has existed for four and one-half to five billion years. Most creation scientists claim the earth could only have existed for about ten thousand years. They give many reasons for this assumption. One simple reason is the meteoric dust on the moon. When NASA first sent spacecraft to the moon, the scientists were worried about the landing. Their worry concerned the depth of the

meteoric dust. They know exactly how much dust falls on the moon each year. They calculated it would be approximately eight feet deep. When they arrived, they found just a thin layer of meteoric dust. The depth of dust on the moon (and hence the solar system) indicates the earth is approximately ten to fifteen thousand years old.

The principles taught in the Bible are reliable. Science does not contradict what the Bible teaches. The Bible is the Word of God and can be trusted.

3. _____ Priority for Believing Creation

A belief in creation is the foundation for the rest of the Bible. If God cannot be trusted concerning the origin of the universe, He cannot be trusted in anything.

Because God is the Creator of the universe and man, man is accountable unto God. Why do men so vehemently attack creationism? Could it be that they do not want to believe in a personal God? If the world just happened into existence, then man also just evolved and there is nothing higher than man. This does two things. It deifies man. Paul wrote about this philosophy. "Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom. 1:25). This verse really reflects the general morality of this age. People are more concerned with the physical creation than they are about God and His desire for man. A belief in evolution also denies all accountability. If man is not the creation of God, then he is accountable to no one. He can do as he pleases. This is the world's philosophy.

God created man and man's spirit will live beyond the grave. Man must make preparation for the future. Accepting Jesus as personal Savior provides eternal life. This is not gained by being good or helping others. It is only gained by faith in Jesus as the Christ. Then a person will be ready to stand before God.

Because we are the creation of God, we are accountable to Him. Your life is not your own. By right of creation, God holds ownership of your life. You should be willing to use your life for Him.

Conclusion

Do you know where you came from? Too many people in the world have no real concept of the origin of the species. They have bought into the lie that everything just happened into

existence. This is a lie from Satan himself. Remember that the Bible describes the devil as the father of all lies (John 8:44). Do not accept his lies.

God wants you to know your true origin. You are the handiwork of God. You did not just happen into existence. You are special to the One who made you. Realizing your true origin can challenge you to follow His desire for your life. Remember that you are accountable to Him. Follow His will and do His work. He deserves your faithfulness.

Baptist Heritage and Salvation by Grace

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will discuss the biblical doctrine of salvation by grace.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Ephesians 2:8, 9.

Background Scripture: Acts 4:12; Romans 5:1, 2; Philippians 1:7; Colossians 1:13, 14; Titus 2:11; 3:7; Hebrews 2:9.

Devotional Reading: Not by Works, Titus 3:5, 6.

Introduction

A doctrine that has held importance for all church history has been that salvation is by grace through faith. Baptists have stood firm in their belief that works do not produce salvation in the lives of any people. It does not matter whether the works are religious activities or simply good deeds for society. No work can produce salvation in the life of an individual.

The focus of this lesson will be on the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. This discussion must necessarily embrace a brief discussion of the One who paid the price of redemption—Jesus Christ. After coming to a better knowledge of the sacrifice for our sins, we can begin to understand the wondrous salvation He purchased. Finally, we will examine how churches have held to this doctrinal position throughout all church history.

1. _____ Coming into the Land
The Israelites prepared for their normal march. The priests carried the Ark of the Covenant and walked toward the Jordan River. The people observed to see what would happen. God had told them to step in the water and the river would open for them (Joshua 3:13). The priests stepped toward the river, but the

waters remained the same. They flowed ferociously down the riverbed. They stepped closer, but the river continued to flow. They reached the river's brink and put the first foot in the water. Immediately the river stopped its flow. The upper portion of the river reacted as though it had reached a dam. The waters "stood and rose up upon an heap" (verse 16). The priests carried the ark to the midst of the river and stood there while the entire congregation crossed on dry ground (verse 17). After the people had fully crossed the Jordan, the priests followed. When their feet reached the point above the flood waters, the river returned to its course and flowed as before (Joshua 4:18). God had provided a miraculous entrance to the Promised Land.

One other event was important to this crossing. While the people crossed the Jordan River, God commanded each tribe to bring a large stone from the midst of the riverbed. With those stones the people were to construct a memorial of this marvelous event (verse 7). Those stones would remind the people of the marvelous blessings of God on His chosen nation. Their hearts would return to a trust in Him.

Coming into the land in such a marvelous way would give confidence to the people. They had been a slave nation for four hundred years. They followed their bondage by wandering in the wilderness for forty years. They had been completely dependent on God. Now they would have to trust Him to help them conquer the Promised Land. Their miraculous entrance assured them of God's presence with them.

2. _____ The Sacrifice

What was the cost of salvation? People often discuss that salvation is free to the believer. This is a true statement, but that does not mean salvation cost nothing. What did that cost include?

Salvation cost the Father something. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Jesus was the physical expression of God. God the Father and God the Son were together in eternity. They were also one. While this is a difficult concept to fully understand, it is exactly what John declared. The heavenly Father was willing to face that time of separation from His only begotten Son. Salvation cost the Father something.

Salvation cost the Son something. Jesus is eternally the Son of God. For eternity past He had been with the Father in the

most glorious of places; yet, for a time He left the splendors of Heaven and came to earth. "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7). The King of kings humbled Himself by taking the frailty of human flesh. At the appropriate time, Jesus willingly went to the cross and died for the sins of the world. This act would have been sad enough had Jesus died for His own sins. Jesus had no sins for which to die. Instead, He suffered and died for others. He willingly sacrificed Himself that all people might have the opportunity to be saved. Salvation cost the Son something.

Salvation has cost the churches something. Since their early history, the churches have faced trying times. Many times their persecutions came because they preached that the only way of salvation was through faith in Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Members of scriptural churches stood on this truth and were killed as a result. As many as fifty million believers died during the Dark Ages because they refused to turn away from Jesus Christ. Even today, those who proclaim that the only way of salvation is through Jesus Christ are called intolerant and bigots. Millions have died because of this one way of salvation. It has cost the churches something.

The sacrifice for sins was not something that came easily. It is a salvation of great expense. The writer of Hebrews described it as "so great salvation" (Heb. 2:3). It is truly magnificent.

3. _____ The Salvation

What kind of salvation did Jesus produce when He paid the price for sins? The Text described it as salvation by grace, through faith. These two phrases reveal the love of God for mankind in producing such a marvelous salvation.

The Requirement. Salvation comes only by the grace of God. A simple definition of grace is "unmerited favor." The idea is of God's willingness to grant something special to people who could never deserve it by their own efforts. The choices are simple. Salvation must either be by grace or by works. It cannot be a little of both (Rom. 11:6). God determined certain criteria must be met for salvation to be received. For an individual to deserve salvation, he must live without sin. No man has ever done that (Rom. 3:23). A perfect, innocent man had to be found. Not only did He have to be perfect but He also had to be infinite. The only way this could happen was for God to become man

(fully God and fully man) so He could pay the price for sins. Jesus Christ satisfied these righteous demands of God. "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). Propitiation is a satisfactory substitute. Jesus satisfied the requirements of God so that every person would have the opportunity to receive salvation.

The Receiving. How can a person receive salvation? A person must receive salvation by trusting in the God of salvation. By faith means "that the individual has stopped trusting in himself and has begun trusting in Jesus Christ." When people trust in themselves, they are working for salvation. If a person could earn salvation by the deeds of his life, then God deserves none of the praise. Works cannot produce salvation because no person can do good works. The best efforts by men are nothing more than the filthy rags used by lepers to bind up their wounds (Isa. 64:6). People must simply receive salvation by faith.

We can be thankful God offered this kind of salvation. If salvation were obtained by the good deeds of the individual, then it could be lost by his failures. The Lord provides a salvation based on His work and love.

4. _____ The Historical Standard of Scriptural Churches

Since early church history, the debate over the method of salvation has raged. Many wanted to possess salvation by some effort they produced; therefore, they began believing in various plans of works for salvation. In works for salvation the emphasis was removed from the Lord and placed on the efforts of man.

A group of churches sprang up in northern Africa called the Donatists. The record of these churches began in the second century after Christ. They continued for at least three centuries. These churches believed that a person had to be mature enough to understand his own sin guiltiness. He had to repent of his own sin to be saved. They understood the inadequacies of people and their need to repent and trust in the Lord for salvation. Another group of scriptural churches received their name from one of their early pastors. The Novations taught that a person was saved only after repenting of sin. Again, this is a firm declaration of salvation apart from good deeds. Early scriptural churches and those that followed held firmly to this belief.

A Roman emperor named Constantine faced great turmoil during his years as ruler. He decided he could unite the kingdom by embracing Christianity. Before going to battle, he claimed to have seen a vision of a cross in the sky and supposedly heard a voice telling him to conquer under that sign. He lined up his troops and had them baptized (sprinkled) so they would all be Christians. He issued the Edict of Milan which granted tolerance for Christians. A great problem was that he embraced a perversion of Christianity. The faith he accepted taught infant baptism and other works to gain salvation. His conversion was greatly denounced by scriptural churches. He soon turned against those conservative churches. Though he claimed to be a believer, it is unlikely that he ever really trusted in Jesus as Savior.

A later scriptural group was the Waldenses. These churches held to beliefs much akin to Baptist confessions of faith of later years. They believed that salvation was by grace through faith and that the ordinances (baptism and the Lord's Supper) were only symbolic, not capable of imparting saving grace. (Edward H. Overbey, *A Brief History of the Baptists*, pages 46-48.)

Popularity of false doctrine in an era does not make it true. Through most of the years of church history, false doctrine has reigned. The truth has been denied by most religions. The area they attack first is that salvation is totally by the grace of God. True churches stood for the truth even in the face of persecution. What a great example to follow!

Conclusion

The doctrine of salvation by grace through faith is a central tenet of scriptural churches. Scriptural churches throughout church history have accepted it. It is important even today. Churches must be careful not to compromise on the truth of God's Word concerning the only way of salvation. If we begin to deviate on this doctrine, we will soon follow the way of false religions. We will begin to question the validity of God's Word. We will begin to question the reality of God Himself. Let us stand for salvation as taught by Jesus Christ—salvation by grace through faith.

Baptist Heritage and Blood Redemption

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will explain that blood redemption is an essential doctrine of New Testament churches.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Revelation 1:5; 5:9.

Background Scripture: Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:7; 2:13; Colossians 1:20; Hebrews 9:12, 14, 22; 1 Peter 1:19; 1 John 1:7.

Devotional Reading: The Blood of the New Testament, Matthew 26:28.

Introduction

The doctrine of blood redemption is vital for New Testament churches no matter the time of their existence. Recently some denominations have decided that people would prefer not to discuss such bloody matters as the true method of redemption. As a result, they have begun to remove such teachings from their services. They will no longer sing such hymns as "Are You Washed in the Blood?" and "Saved by the Blood." No sermons discuss the awful sacrifice Jesus made to purchase salvation. Such themes are considered unpleasant. They want everyone to come to church services and enjoy themselves.

While it is important for people to come to the house of God and have joy in the worship of the Lord, it is more important for them to realize how they can receive eternal life. People must hear the message of redemption if they are to trust in Jesus as Savior. This doctrine is essential for churches to believe and preach.

This lesson will focus on the time element in the doctrine of blood redemption. We will begin by looking to the past and see-

ing Old Testament examples which pointed to the sacrifice of the Messiah on the cross. Then, we will examine the actual shedding of blood by Jesus for the redemption of all people. Finally, we will look to the future and study a heavenly worship service and see why those in Heaven give worship to the Lamb. This should reinforce to us exactly how important the doctrine of blood redemption is.

1. _____ Pointing Toward the Messiah

The Old Testament is full of examples which point the reader toward the Messiah. “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal. 3:24). This indicates the Law had an express purpose. It pointed toward the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

The sacrifices under the Law pointed toward Christ. While all the sacrifices under the Law were part of the overall portrait of Christ, some sacrifices more clearly showed His marvelous work. The Passover celebration expressed the importance of the blood sacrifice for redemption. Each family had to take a perfect lamb and kill it in the appropriate manner. They had to take the blood of that lamb and paint it on the doorposts (side and upper). The application of the blood protected the family. The next day, the Israelites were granted a release from bondage. This pictures God’s offer of salvation to every person (Titus 2:11). To receive deliverance, a person had to be willing to apply the blood. Those families in Egypt who did not apply the blood to the door suffered death. If a person today does not accept God’s offer through the blood of His Son, he also will die. The writer of Hebrews declared, “Without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). The blood of Old Testament sacrifices was not the means by which a person could be saved (Heb. 9:12). Those sacrifices only pictured what would happen in the sacrifice of “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Without His shed blood, no one would ever be saved.

Old Testament prophecy also pointed toward the sacrifice of the Messiah. Jesus fulfilled about three hundred thirty-three prophecies. These prophecies were as varied as the declaration that He would be born of a virgin (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 7:14), that His birth would be in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), that He would travel early to Egypt (Hosea 11:1), that His garments would be parted

(Psalm 22:18) and many others. Daniel's vision of the seventy weeks (Dan. 9:25) declared almost to the day when the Messiah would die as the sacrifice for sin. Possibly the most dramatic prophecies dealt with His death for the sins of the world. The Old Testament described in accurate detail the events of the crucifixion. These details include His betrayal by a friend (Psalm 41:9), the price of the betrayal (Zech. 11:12), the piercing of His hands, feet and side (Zech. 12:10) and even His resurrection (Psalm 16:10). Possibly the most beautiful aspect of His sacrifice was that it was not for Himself but for others (Isa. 53:5). Such accuracy could not have been coincidence. Jesus is the Messiah.

Blood sacrifices were common during the years of the Old Testament. God began the pattern of blood sacrifices when He killed animals to provide a covering for Adam and Eve after they had rebelled against God. Each sacrifice of the Old Testament pointed toward the coming Messiah and His sacrifice for the sins of all people. The Old Testament taught the importance of blood redemption.

2. _____ Portrait of Suffering

The New Testament also adds to the portrait of blood redemption. It introduces the reader to the prophetic Messiah. He is none other than Jesus of Nazareth.

His life prepared Him to be that great sacrifice. The Old Testament pictures demanded a perfect sacrifice. The priests examined the offered animal for any defects. One blemish disqualified it from being a proper sacrifice. Jesus had to follow the pattern established for sacrifices. He had to be without spot or blemish. His enemies arrested Him and brought Him to trial. Their examination produced nothing worthy of death. They hired men to lie about Him. The Roman governor's examination was thorough and severe. When the examination was completed, Pilate presented Jesus to the Jewish mob and declared, "I find no fault in him" (John 19:4, 6). The power of Rome could find nothing in Jesus worthy of death. He went to the cross and died for the sins of others. He lived a perfect life and was qualified to be the sacrifice for sins.

His death provided the offer of salvation for every person. Because Jesus lived a perfect life, He did not have to die for Himself. As the eternal and perfect Son of God, He could die for

others. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities" (Isa. 53:5). His death on the cross paid the price for all sins. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Without the blood there is no redemption.

His resurrection produced the power of salvation. While His death was essential to pay the price of sins, the resurrection of Jesus was vital to produce the power of salvation. If Jesus had not risen from death, He would not have shown Himself to be the Son of God (Rom. 1:4). The death of mere man could never pay the price of the sins of others. He must be the Son of God. Jesus, the resurrected Son of God, could give salvation to others. Without the resurrection, we have no hope of salvation (1 Cor. 15:17). Jesus is alive today making intercession for us. Because He is alive, He has the power to save to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25).

It took the entirety of His work to produce salvation. A good life would not be sufficient. It took a perfect life. Just any death would not be sufficient. It took the death of the Son of God. How could we know Jesus is the Son of God? He arose from death. He paid the price with His own blood. This is what blood redemption really means.

3. _____ Praise for the Messiah's Suffering

The Text relates a special worship that will take place at the throne of God. There the twenty-four elders will bow in worship of the Lamb of God. While some debate the exact identity of these elders, one thing is clear. They represent human beings. Their song of praise proves this. "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5:9). This is a uniquely human reason to praise God. Jesus tasted "death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). Only people can offer praise for this beautiful gift of salvation.

The day will come when all creation will bow the knee and acknowledge "Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:11). You will bow before the Lord and acknowledge His rightful place at the throne of God. Because this is true, why wait? It would be much better for us to declare today

our faith in Jesus Christ. We should openly proclaim Jesus as the Son of God. His sacrifice paid the price for our sins.

Conclusion

The doctrine of blood redemption is one that should stir the hearts of every believer. What Jesus did in dying on the cross is an amazing expression of love and grace. The writer challenges each student to examine the Background Scripture in the heading of this lesson. Each of these Scriptures shows another aspect of the beauty of blood redemption. You are challenged to find the many blessings received because Jesus willingly offered Himself on the cross as the sacrifice for your sins.

Baptist Heritage and Security of the Believer

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will discuss why security of the believer is an essential doctrine to our Baptist heritage.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Romans 8:35-39.
Background Scripture: John 6:37-39, 51-58; 10:28, 29;
Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 10:14.
Devotional Reading: Able To Keep, 2 Timothy 1:12.

Introduction

Baptists have always held firmly to a belief in a secure salvation. While other religions teach holding out faithful unto the end, true Baptists teach that a believer has eternal life and will never lose his salvation. This makes a difference in the lives of believers. They can continue their service for God confident that they are held in the mighty hand of God. There is no need for worry or despair (2 Tim. 1:7).

In this lesson we will discuss many biblical proofs of this great doctrine. This will be done by an examination of various passages of Scripture to see what they say about security. As the lesson draws to a close, we will briefly study historical evidence that true Baptists have always upheld this marvelous truth. We should be encouraged and challenged by a deeper understanding of the doctrine that teaches once saved, always saved.

1. _____ The Promise
One reason Baptists have always believed in a secure salvation is because of the promises of God's Word. Many Scriptures

point to a present possession of eternal life. This one phrase should quell all doubts about security of the believer.

One of the most beloved verses in the entire Bible is John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." When Jesus promised Nicodemus that he could have everlasting life, He meant that anyone who believed would become a child of God and would be secure in salvation. That was the clear teaching of the Lord.

The Lord never spoke words flippantly. When He made a clear statement like this, it was His direct intention. This was a promise He made to every believer. When God makes a promise, He remembers it as clearly as though He had made it today (2 Peter 3:9). If He promised to hold believers secure in salvation, He will do exactly what He said.

The writer of Hebrews described this promise of security with interesting words. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). His salvation is not something that is incomplete. It is a salvation to the uttermost. Believers have no need to worry because God has promised to hold them secure in salvation.

2. _____ The Picture

Another reason believers can have confidence in a secure salvation is the pictures used to describe it. The most revealing describes the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as a sealing agent (Eph. 4:30). This thought came from the historical use of sealing legal documents.

The seal was a device used by the person in authority to show that a document was for authorized use only. One example of such a sealing came from the book of Esther. Haman encouraged King Ahasuerus to issue a decree concerning what he called a rebellious people. The king gave Haman his signet ring and authorized him to issue a decree stating what he wanted (Esther 3:10). Haman then decreed that, on a certain day, all people were commanded to attack the Jews and kill them. He was proven to be an evil man and was hanged on the gallows. The king then authorized Mordecai to issue a decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves. This decree was also sealed with

the king's signet ring (Esther 8:8). These decrees became law because they were authorized by the king's seal.

Revelation gives another example. The Lamb takes possession of a scroll that is sealed with seven seals. This is a legal document of great importance. A Roman legal document sealed with seven seals indicated it was a matter of great importance. It could be a document declaring the innocence of an accused man. It could be the title deed to land. The only one who could open the document was one with legal authority. In Revelation the One with legal authority to open the seven-sealed book is none other than Jesus Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Lamb of God. The sealing made the document secure.

The sealing of the believer as a child of God takes place with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The indwelling is called "the earnest of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 1:22). An earnest was pledge money given at the moment of a transaction that declared the full payment was to follow. The Holy Spirit dwells within the believer to declare God possesses the individual (Rom. 8:16).

The seal in the heart of the believer gives assurance that he is the child of God. He does not have to worry whether God will hold him secure. God has placed His legally binding seal on that individual.

3. _____ The Power

Still another reason the believer can have confidence in salvation is that salvation is based on the power of God, not the power of man. Think what would happen if a person had to keep himself saved. All it would take to disqualify him from salvation would be one tiny sin. Then he would be lost for all eternity. Salvation is not dependent on the power of the individual. It depends on the power of God.

Jesus declared that security is like the protection of a good shepherd. (Read John 10:17-30.) The shepherd holds the safety of the flock in his own hands. Jesus said that He held believers in the palm of His hands. Nothing can snatch them away from Jesus. He also declared that the almighty hand of God also holds them secure in salvation. No power could possibly snatch believers from this double bond of security. Salvation cannot be lost.

The Text (Rom. 8:35-39) also declares this marvelous fact. No one and nothing can separate the believer from the love of God.

The lists included situations on earth (verse 35), principalities beyond this world (verse 38), present or future conditions (verse 38) or any other created thing (verse 39). Nothing can take away God's love from those who have trusted in Jesus as Savior. Their salvation is secure because it is based on the power of God, not the abilities of man.

4. _____ Past Belief of Baptists

Historically, Baptists have often declared their belief in security of salvation. This began quite early and has continued for all church history. Notice the declarations given by Baptists.

Various councils and doctrinal statements through church history declared a similar belief in security in salvation. In 1742, the Philadelphia Association adopted a confession of faith which included this belief. Those who trust in Jesus as their Savior "can never fall from the state of justification." About one hundred years later, the state association of New Hampshire adopted a confession of faith. It declared—"justification includes the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life" Those who are saved "will not utterly fall away and finally perish." Baptists in America have accepted security in salvation.

Throughout history, Baptists (by whatever name they had) have accepted the belief that salvation is secure. Other religions have often mocked this Baptist doctrine by declaring we give our members a "license to sin." God wants to change the heart and motivation of His children. He wants His children to lovingly follow the desires of their heavenly Father. Security in salvation can draw the believer even closer to such a caring, loving Savior. (Edward T. Hiscox, *The Hiscox Guide for Baptist Churches*.)

Conclusion

Much more could be written about the importance of security in salvation. Possibly the greatest benefit of this belief comes in the matter of peace and confidence. The believer does not have to worry about whether or not he is saved today. When he trusted in Jesus as Savior, he immediately received eternal life. It is secure and can never be taken away. He can confidently proclaim his present possession of eternal life. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye

may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:13). When a person trusts Jesus for salvation, he can have confidence (know) that he possesses eternal life. This confidence can increase one’s daily faith. The secure believer will go further in service than the one who worries about his eternity. Please do not worry about salvation. Be confident in Him. He will never leave you nor forsake you (Heb. 13:5).

H v y u l c  y u r l t r t u r r r

Baptist Heritage and the Perversion of Infant Baptism

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will discuss the fact that true Baptists have never been proponents of baptizing infants or any other perversion of baptism.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Matthew 28: 19, 20.

Background Scripture: Matthew 3:7, 8, 13-17; John 3:22, 23; Acts 2:38-41; 8:36-38; 10:47, 48; 16:15, 33.

Devotional Reading: Only Saved Ones, Acts 9:3-9, 17, 18.

Introduction

A doctrine of the churches that was quickly perverted was baptism. From the beginning of the churches, baptism played an important role. The Lord showed the importance of baptism by His instructions to the first church (Matt. 28:19, 20). Churches were to baptize every new believer. Jesus did not give His instructions flippantly. They were His marching orders to the churches. Their responsibility was to hold tenaciously to the truth. Sad to say, some did not care to preserve the truth. Instead, they terribly perverted this beautiful doctrine.

The focus of this lesson is on truth as opposed to error. We will examine what composes scriptural baptism. In the process of doing this, we will see the various components of baptism. We will also learn how some people perverted baptism and made it something God never intended. True Baptists have always rejected perversions of baptism even in the face of persecution.

Baptist heritage is precious. Scriptural churches have a legacy that goes back to the church Jesus established. To attempt to change what He taught His church is to claim knowledge supe-

rior to His wisdom. That could never be true. Churches today must seek to follow what the Bible says rather than what modern compromise encourages. "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4). Churches must stand on thus saith the Lord rather than on modern, inclusive theology.

1. _____ The Authority To Baptize

As Jesus prepared to ascend, the disciples needed instructions. The Lord spoke these words (Matt. 28:19, 20) to challenge them to continue His work. He authorized them to continue His work.

God has always issued the authority to baptize. Just prior to the ministry of Jesus, God instructed John the Baptist to enter a particular ministry. He would be the forerunner of the Messiah and would prepare a people for the Lord. He was "the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD" (Isa. 40:3). John had no right to pass that authority to those who followed. Only God has the right to authorize baptism.

The authority to baptize today is in the possession of scriptural churches. This did not happen because they chose this practice on their own. It came from the call and the commission of the Lord. No individual pastor or believer has the personal authority to baptize. When the pastor enters the baptistry, he does so by the authority of a New Testament church.

Proper authority is necessary to make baptism scriptural. Growing up, this writer spent many summer days at the swimming hole. Many of those playing there were believers. We would sneak up behind someone and quickly dunk him under the water. When he finally came up, we would proclaim that we had baptized him. If every believer has the authority to baptize, then many kids around that town received baptism. The authority is not in the hands of individual believers, but it rests solely in scriptural churches. People have no right to pervert the authority of baptism.

2. _____ The Need To Be Baptized

In God's commission to the churches, one step preceded the command to baptize. That was sharing the gospel story. A person must become a child of God prior to being baptized. Was this formula followed in the early church?

On the day of Pentecost, the first church received the power to go out with dynamic power. In the streets of Jerusalem those church members began sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. Peter preached a dynamic message that convicted the hearts of individuals. Some came to him and asked what they should do. His response was that they should repent. The first thing a lost person should do is to repent of his sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). Notice the proper order. First, they trusted in Jesus as Savior. After they were saved, they were baptized. Every child of God should follow the Lord in baptism.

On another occasion Philip had the opportunity to witness to an Ethiopian. This man was earnestly seeking God. He was busily engaged in reading the book of Isaiah. Philip shared that the person described in Isaiah 53 was none other than Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was the sacrifice for sins. The Ethiopian was gloriously saved. He saw water and asked Philip if he could be baptized. Philip responded, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." The Ethiopian answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). This man had trusted in Jesus as his Savior. As a child of God, he had a need to follow the Lord in baptism. That child of God followed the scriptural pattern.

Some have taught that baptism was the completion of salvation. They declared that without baptism, a person would go to hell. Since some babies died as infants, they must be baptized to assure they would go to Heaven. This terrible practice declared that any baptized infant would automatically go to Heaven. Infant baptism became common by the second century after Christ. God declared a person must first believe in Jesus before receiving baptism. An infant cannot believe because he does not understand; therefore, he cannot receive scriptural baptism.

The biblical record reveals no infant being baptized. Only people mature enough to understand their natural condition, repent of their sins and trust in Jesus as Savior could follow in baptism. What is that age? It is the age when a person understands his personal responsibility. When a person realizes he is

lost, he needs to be saved. Once he has trusted Jesus as Savior, he should receive baptism.

3. _____ The Method of Baptism

The Bible teaches the proper method of baptism. If a person is going to follow the biblical pattern, he must submit to immersion for baptism. Why do Baptists believe in immersion for baptism?

The word demands immersion. According to language scholars, the word baptism comes from a word meaning “to dip, plunge or immerse.” The idea given included the dying of cloth. To make sure the cloth is consistently dyed, the entire garment must be submerged in the dye so the dye can penetrate every fiber. Baptism must be the full immersion of the body in water.

The examples demanded immersion. The various examples of baptism in the Bible show it to be immersion of the body in water. The ultimate example is Jesus. Both Jesus and John went into the water. When the baptism was completed, Jesus “went up straightway out of the water” (Matt. 3:16). If sprinkling was sufficient, it was ridiculous for Jesus to enter the water. Another example is that of the Ethiopian. Both the Ethiopian and Philip went down into the water. Again, that was a ridiculous practice if sprinkling or pouring was sufficient. The examples demanded the full immersion of the body in water.

While immersion is the biblical method of baptism, some soon tried to pervert this proper method. Since many believed that a person had to be baptized to receive full salvation, what would happen to those who believed on their deathbeds but did not have the opportunity to be baptized? Without baptism, they would have gone to hell. To alleviate this problem, some began to baptize individuals by pouring water over them on their deathbeds. Soon anyone could choose pouring for baptism. Baptism must be by immersion, not some accepted alternative.

The Lord definitely had a purpose in selecting immersion for baptism. He could have chosen sprinkling or pouring, but He did not. He wanted submission by His children. He wanted their willingness to do what He demanded. When man’s way conflicts with God’s, danger is ahead. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12).

Conclusion

Baptism is a matter of great importance in the church Jesus established. He called out His assembly and instructed them how to conduct His business. What happens when people in churches decide that they know more than God about His work? They begin to stray from the Bible and start doing things that contradict clearly its teachings. This has happened in matters of baptism. Some religions today teach that baptism has the purpose of completing salvation. That doctrine is foreign to the Word of God. Salvation is by grace through faith without religious or moral deeds (Eph. 2:8, 9). Some religions teach that, since baptism is a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, sprinkling or pouring is sufficient to complete the picture. Though baptism is a picture of the gospel story, sprinkling and pouring are not sufficient because that is not what God commanded. Churches must be willing to follow the teachings of the Bible and the commands of the Lord. Only in so doing can we maintain the Baptist heritage that has lasted now for almost two thousand years.

Baptist Heritage and the Perversion of the Lord's Supper

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will explain the many unscriptural beliefs that are perpetrated concerning the Lord's Supper.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: 1 Corinthians 11:23-29.
Background Scripture: Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 10:21; 11:17-22.
Devotional Reading: One Body, 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17.

Introduction

On the night Jesus was arrested, He instituted a special celebration for His church. He had gathered with His disciples for the purpose of observing the Jewish Passover Feast. In that feast, Jews recalled their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. They had various elements in that celebration: the Passover lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs and the cup. From these elements Jesus chose two to use in the institution of a church ordinance now called the Lord's Supper. The Jewish feast memorialized God's delivering them from bondage. This new feast commemorated what Jesus would do in providing eternal redemption for all people. This marvelous feast will be the focus of discussion in this lesson.

During the course of church history, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper has endured many attacks from Satan. False religions have changed the purpose, the participants and the plan of celebration. Satan hates all people and wants them to reject God's gracious offer of eternal life. One way he has done

this is through perverting this beautiful ordinance. This lesson will show some of these perversions.

1. _____ The Purpose Perverted

Why did the Lord establish this celebration? The Lord said they would do this “in remembrance of me” (1 Cor. 11:24, 25). Paul’s conclusion was that in partaking of its elements, one would “shew the Lord’s death till he come” (verse 26). The purpose of the Lord’s Supper is to draw the mind back to the marvelous sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The participant would recall what Jesus endured to purchase salvation. The Lord’s Supper is a memorial ordinance.

Certain religions seek to transform the Lord’s Supper into a sacrament capable of imparting saving grace. This perversion has taken on two main thoughts: consubstantiation and transubstantiation. These two false doctrines have the same basis. They begin by declaring that the individual must do something to complete the salvation Jesus Christ began. Nothing about this is even close to the truth. The Bible declares that salvation comes by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8) without the deeds of the Law (Rom. 3:20, 28). Many other Scriptures concur that salvation is the work of God, not man. Since this is true, even the religious work of partaking of the Lord’s Supper cannot grant or complete salvation. In spite of this fact, many have perverted the Lord’s Supper to make it the means by which a person obtains salvation.

The false doctrine of consubstantiation teaches that the elements are not only symbolic of the body and blood of Jesus but they also impart saving grace to the participant. Without partaking of the Lord’s Supper, the individual does not have full salvation. The false doctrine of transubstantiation goes a step further in perverting the truth. It teaches that the bread and cup are miraculously turned into the actual body and blood of Jesus. It is the partaking of the actual body and blood of Jesus that imparts saving grace. Again without partaking of the Lord’s Supper, the individual does not have salvation. These two false doctrines have totally perverted God’s plan of salvation.

Jesus began this celebration as a reminder of His sacrifice on the cross. This memorial will continue until the day He returns for His own. His words remind us of that future day. “But I say

unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:29). Let us participate in this celebration by keeping our minds on His soon return.

2. _____ The Participants Perverted

Who has the right to eat at your table? The only people who can sit at your table are the ones you invite to be there. That principle is also true when it comes to the Lord's table. Only those He has invited can participate; yet, this truth has been greatly perverted.

Some have tried to make this a universal ordinance. Can any person partake? Paul clearly taught that the Lord restricted certain ones from sitting at His table. The church at Corinth had a particular member who was involved in a public sin. Paul encouraged this church to discipline that man. "I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat" (1 Cor. 5:11). Those involved in gross public sins were not to participate in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 10:21).

On the positive side of this doctrine, Paul indicated that those who gathered in a church had the right to celebrate together this memorial ordinance (1 Cor. 11:18, 20). Why is this important? A church has limited authority. No church has the authority to discipline those outside its fellowship. A church cannot discipline a lost person or the members of other churches. It only has authority over its own members. Because it cannot exercise authority over nonmembers, it also cannot offer this church ordinance to those outside its fellowship. The Lord's Supper is an ordinance celebrated by a church to draw its membership closer to the Lord and to each other.

Some people have a problem because this excludes members of other scriptural churches. The problem is not whether a person is a believer or not. The problem is that this is the Lord's table and not man's. People do not have the right to change God's restrictions. They must follow the standards set by the Lord.

Remember that the Lord invites those He wants to sit at His table. He has determined the Lord's Supper to be a local church ordinance. That means only members of a particular church

have the right to partake when that particular church celebrates this ordinance. Truth cannot be changed because somebody does not like it. The Lord's Supper is for a local church.

3. _____ The Plan Perverted

The church at Corinth had turned the celebration of the Lord's Supper into something far removed from what God wanted. Remember that Jesus established this ordinance to commemorate His work of salvation. The individual needed to remember what Jesus had done on the cross. What should have been a memorial of Jesus became a feast of pride. The Lord's plan for this marvelous celebration had been perverted.

Some today pervert the Lord's Supper by changing the elements used. They declare that, because it is a symbolic ordinance, it really does not matter what elements are used as long as the heart is right with God. If a person's heart is really right with God, he will want to follow His directions. Jesus did not take a small glass of Kool-Aid and a soda cracker. He chose the elements from the Passover Feast. These were unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. To consider using anything else is a perversion of the plan Jesus established.

What was the order Jesus established for the celebration of the Lord's Supper? It began with the body of Christ gathering in one place. Jesus brought His disciples into the upper room. This indicates the feast should take place when the church is meeting together. Jesus then took the loaf of unleavened bread and blessed it. He broke it to disperse the small pieces to His disciples (Matt. 26:26). This bread was a picture of the body of Jesus which would be broken on the cross. "His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men" (Isa. 52:14). After the bread was distributed and eaten, the Lord took the cup and blessed it also. He then told the disciples to partake of the cup for it was a picture of His shed blood (Matt. 26:27, 28). The shed blood of Jesus was a necessary part of His sacrifice (Heb. 9:22). The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was necessary to provide salvation. Partaking the Lord's Supper reminds the individual of the great love of God.

No person has the right to change the plan Jesus used in establishing the Lord's Supper. He had a particular order in the celebration. Churches should endeavor to follow His plan.

Conclusion

The Lord's Supper is a marvelous celebration of a church ordinance. It is a time when the entire body can gather for one purpose to commemorate the sacrifice of Jesus for sin. Church members should be able to come together with nothing else on their minds. To celebrate Jesus Christ and His great work should consume each thought of the individual. It reminds each individual what Jesus did. He willingly went to the cross. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). You should remember the cost of salvation. That is the purpose of the Lord's Supper. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26).



Baptist Churches and Freedom of Conscience

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will discuss the fact that Baptists have always been promoters of freedom of conscience.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: John 8:32-36.
Background Scripture: Acts 23:1; 2 Corinthians 6:11-18; 1 Timothy 1:5, 19; 3:9; Hebrews 13:18; 1 Peter 3:16, 21.
Devotional Reading: Paul's Pure Conscience, Acts 24:16.

Introduction

Freedom is the desire of virtually every heart. Nobody wants to live bound by chains. History's greatest cry has been for freedom. In countries bound by unfair taxation or oppressive governments, people have risen to demand freedom. That has happened many times in history.

Is political freedom the only thing important in the hearts of humankind? Even deeper than the desire to be free in life is the desire to be eternally free. This desire is a natural part of the creation. The Preacher declared that God "hath set the world in their heart" (Eccl. 3:11). The word given for world means "the vanishing point, time out of mind or eternity." God placed within the human mind a desire for eternity. The satisfaction of that desire for eternity is where man will find his truest freedom.

This lesson will focus upon how Baptists have stood firm for freedom. The discussion will begin by showing how a person can have freedom through salvation. Baptists have also fought for religious freedom at every opportunity. Baptists struggled for

freedom of conscience. The lesson will conclude with an admonition for Baptists today to stand for freedom. The challenge of this lesson is great.

1. _____ Redemptive Freedom

The bondage of Israel in Egypt is a picture of the natural condition of man. The nation was bound and had no way of escape. Though the Israelites were in distress, they could do nothing about their condition. Then God sent a deliverer to help them. The help came by the mighty power of God. Through the strength of God, the Israelites were delivered from bondage. They had freedom at last.

Mankind is naturally bound in sin. Many Scriptures declare this fact. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Every person is a natural-born sinner. No matter how hard one tries, he cannot reach the standard of perfection demanded by the righteous God. Every attempt falls short of that standard. What is that standard of perfection? Jesus Christ lived a perfect life. Even when people railed against Him, He stood with a perfect heart. All attempts by people to achieve that standard of perfection fall short of the goal. Because of this inability to achieve perfection, mankind needs help. Jesus provided salvation for mankind.

How did Jesus provide freedom? The cost for salvation was the life of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16). Redemption comes from a word meaning "to set free." That is what Jesus did in paying the price on Calvary. He gave the opportunity for freedom. The Text declares how free a person is in Jesus Christ. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). He grants a freedom that is beyond the imagination of mankind. It is an eternal freedom that can never be lost. Even when chains bind the body, the spirit of the saved person has complete freedom. This comes because of the redemptive work of Jesus.

Chains and stocks held Paul and Silas in the prison cell. They had no freedom; yet, in the midst of that prison cell, they lifted their voices in praise to God. Though they had no physical freedom, they were free indeed. God's freedom is the greatest freedom.

2. _____ Religious Freedom

A problem faced by Baptists throughout their history has been their inability to worship God freely. In most countries, the prominent religion would acquire authority from the government and begin the persecution of all other religions. This meant that Baptists faced persecution in almost every era of history. What is the belief of Baptists concerning the freedom of conscience?

Early in church history, a group of Baptists called the Paulicians grew in number in a region of Armenia. They established a country of their own called Teprice. This country endured for one hundred fifty years. These Baptists had the ability to establish themselves as the state religion; instead, they determined that everyone could worship as he chose. Many inhabitants of that region were Muslims. Even this religion so far removed from Christianity had the right to worship as it chose. Baptists have always believed in freedom of religion. (John T. Christian, *A History of the Baptists*, Vol. 1, pages 51, 52.)

When Baptists migrated to the New World, they expected to find the freedom to worship as they chose. Many of the settlers of the colonies came to the New World to escape religious persecution in Europe. One would automatically assume that, when they arrived in the New World to establish their new colonies, they would grant the right to worship freely. In the colonies, whatever religion held the prominent position was soon established as the recognized religion. They persecuted all other religions. A Baptist pastor named John Clarke traveled to an area now known as Rhode Island. He had a desire to establish a new colony with religious liberty. He traveled to England to request this right. After twelve years of pleading, King Charles II granted a new charter for the colony of Rhode Island that safeguarded liberty of religion. As a result, Baptists had the authority to write their own constitution.

When these Baptists wrote the constitution of the Rhode Island colony, they included a phrase concerning freedom of conscience. "No one in this colony shall henceforth be molested, punished, disturbed, or brought to trial on account of any differences of opinion in the matter of religion." The other New England colonies desired to drive out the Quakers. They con-

tacted the leaders of the Rhode Island colony and requested their help. The response was clear. "We shall strictly adhere to the foundation principles on which this colony was first settled" (Christian, A History of the Baptists, Vol. 2, page 44). They remained true to their belief in freedom of conscience.

Religious freedom has always been important to Baptists. From their earliest history to the most recent times, Baptists have always stood for religious rights. Even if a person chooses not to worship at all, he has that right. Does this mean that Baptists advocate people's rejection of God? No, Baptists have always been concerned about the spiritual welfare of the earth's population. The Lord gave churches the responsibility to reach out to people with the gospel. Baptists realize faith cannot be forced upon people. This is a major difference between Baptists and most other religions. Baptists realize faith is a matter of choice. Jesus Christ can be rejected or accepted. Everyone has the freedom to choose concerning Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

No one can honestly question the passion Baptists have toward freedom of conscience. From the earliest writers, Baptists have advocated the right of the individual to choose how he worships God. Tertullian was a Baptist who lived and wrote soon after Christ. He proclaimed that every person had "a natural and inalienable right to worship God according to his own conscience." He went on to declare: "Every man should worship according to his own convictions; one man's religion neither harms nor helps another man. It is assuredly no part of religion to compel religion" (Christian, A History of the Baptists, Vol. 1, page 38).

The apostle Paul wrote, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17). There can be no true freedom apart from the Lord. Too many people think freedom is the ability to do whatever they want. True freedom is the ability to know right from wrong and the wisdom to choose what is good above what is bad. That ability only comes from the Lord. Truly when the Lord grants freedom to an individual, he is "free indeed."

Baptist Heritage and the World System

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will understand that even though they are in the world, if they are saved, they are not of the world.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: 1 John 2:15-17.

Background Scripture: Matthew 8:34; John 8:23; 17:14, 16; Romans 12:2; Titus 2:12; James 4:4; 1 John 3:1; 4:4, 5.

Devotional Reading: The Light of the World, Matthew 5:14-16.

Introduction

Jesus was always clear about the place the world should hold in the lives of God's children. On one occasion Jesus was teaching the Jews. He was in the Temple and none of the religious hierarchy laid hands on Him. He told them, "Ye are of this world; I am not of this world" (John 8:23). This statement brought confusion to the people. They felt that Jesus must have had the same origin as they. What could He mean? Jesus did not mean He did not have a physical body. Instead, He spoke of the focus of life. The Jews had worldly things as their focus while He looked only to the will of God.

Later, Jesus prayed and instructed His disciples about their place in the world. Jesus prayed, "The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:14). This prayer asked for the Father's help in protecting the disciples. Jesus knew they would soon face trying times. Without the help of the Father, they would quickly fail. The disciples' focus must not be on the world.

What is the place for Baptists in the world? As Jesus said, we are to be in the world but not really of the world. Can individu-

als be a part of the world and churches remain pure? This lesson focuses on where churches and members should stand concerning friendship with the world. This has always been an issue for Baptists. Can churches remain true to the Lord and still effectively minister in the world?

1. _____ The Attempt To Marry the
Church and the World

Soon after the ascension of the Lord, churches began facing opposition. The early opponents to church activity came from the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem. They had heard the proclamation of the gospel and were convicted of their sins. Rather than turning from their sins, they lashed out against those bearing the message of salvation. They were soon joined in the persecution by men in the Roman government. Governments always need someone to blame their troubles on. The unpopular believers were a ready scapegoat and received the blame for the trouble faced by Rome. Persecution had progressed from merely religious opposition to governmental sanctioned oppression.

Some of those early churches began to feel the pressure to compromise. Their compromise brought an easing of the persecution; therefore, they took it a step further. Soon these liberal, compromising, worldly churches had joined with the government in their persecution of the spiritual, conservative, separated churches. Worldly Christianity had become the established state religion. This marriage of church and state presented many problems for the scriptural churches. The doctrines of the worldly churches became the law of the land. When scriptural churches refused to accept the baptism of those unscriptural churches, persecution followed. About 1524, Cardinal Hosius, a Catholic priest, wrote, "Were it not that the baptists have been grievously tormented and cut off with the knife during the past twelve hundred years, they would swarm in greater number than all the Reformers" (J. M. Carroll, *The Trail of Blood*, page 3.). How many people lost their lives because they were unwilling to compromise their faith for the world? It has been estimated that up to fifty million believers lost their lives refusing to recant their faith in Christ.

Are some professing believers attempting to do the same today? It has become popular for religions to go along with the

politically correct ideology of those in political power. Pastors and churches are afraid to stand against the sins of society because they fear the label of intolerance. "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19, 20). We must stand for Christ no matter what the world's opposition is.

2. _____ Areas of Compromise Faced Today

Satan is using the attitude of the world to get churches to compromise their beliefs. This is done in many areas today.

Churches are tempted to compromise their stand on morals. The standards of the world are constantly changing. Life-styles that God declared abominable are not just alternative life-styles. People today want society to be able to determine what is acceptable and unacceptable. The world now accepts murder (they call it reproductive rights/abortion and physician assisted suicide) but condemns free speech (they call it intolerance). The apostle Paul said the time would come when people would take pleasure in other people's doing evil (Rom. 1:32). The world system has gained so much control that, in some countries, preaching on certain biblical subjects (such as condemning the sin of homosexuality) is considered hate speech. Churches must be careful not to compromise the truth of God's Word.

Church members are tempted to compromise their stand on doctrine. This is an area that hits a little closer to home for conservative Baptist churches. Some people question whether churches should bother teaching all the doctrines. After all, teaching certain doctrines might offend certain people and they might not want to come back. While pastors should teach "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), they can do so with a heart of love. A person can preach about the security of salvation without bashing the heads of those who disagree. The key is to stand positively on what the Bible teaches rather than only speaking negatively about others. In so doing we are letting "God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4).

Satan wants churches to deviate from thus saith the Lord. Satan will not begin by asking a church to deny the Word of God. He will start with a small compromise in a seemingly insignificant area. If he can have success in small compromises,

he will soon have success in larger areas. Churches must stand true to the Word of God.

3. _____ Accomplishing Victory in the World

How can churches and individuals have victory in the world? “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). How is victory possible?

First, the individual or a church must have the affections right. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1 John 2:15). What is it you love in life? In a world that is unsure economically, some people want to focus their attention and efforts on gaining financial security. There is nothing wrong with taking care of one’s family. The problem is in setting one’s priorities on the world rather than on God. Jesus encouraged His followers to build up heavenly treasures rather than earthly treasures. “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:21).

Next, the individual or a church must recognize the conflict between Christ and the world (1 John 2:16). Nothing worldly can be in fellowship with God. James wrote “that the friendship of the world is enmity with God” (James 4:4). If a person claims friendship with the world, he is also declaring he is at war with God. Jesus talked about the impossibility of a person’s being able to serve both worldly desires and godly pursuits (Matt. 6:24). Too many people want to be a Christian on Sunday but live like the world the rest of the week. The world fights against Christ and seeks to dominate. If a person gives in to the world six days a week, he will only be a hypocritical Christian on Sunday. It will not be genuine Christianity.

Finally, the individual or a church must understand that this world’s goods do not last for long (1 John 2:17). People are so concerned about laying up treasures on earth. While it is necessary to prepare for the future on earth (such as children’s education or one’s retirement), it is of greater importance to prepare for eternity. What is the benefit of gaining all the wealth of the world but not having eternal life (Mark 8:36)? Without Christ there is no real future. The riches laid up in Heaven will last forever (Matt. 6:20). There is security in heavenly treasures.

Victory is a concept people love. They love the winning team. True victory is available to every child of God. To gain victory, he must turn from worldly pursuits and seek the Lord. Martha and Mary both were around the Lord. Martha was encumbered with the cares of the world. Jesus said that Mary had chosen the “good part” (Luke 10:42).

Conclusion

What place does the world hold in your heart and life? When you awake in the morning, where does your mind immediately go? If you consider only the things of the world, your focus of attention is wrong. This lesson challenges us to set our minds in the right order. Do not become overly fond of the world. To do so is to fall in love with the world. That is being an enemy of God. Instead, we must fall completely in love with the Lord so our lives can be pleasing to Him.

Baptist Heritage and the Doctrine of Faithfulness

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will explain that faithfulness and loyalty to the Lord and His churches have been a Baptist priority then and now.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Acts 16:14, 15.

Background Scripture: 1 Corinthians 4:2; Colossians 4:7, 9; 1 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 3:2-5; Revelation 2:13.

Devotional Reading: Faithful Abraham, Genesis 18:17-19.

Introduction

The Text tells the story of a woman who had trusted in Jesus as Savior. Lydia immediately knew the importance of serving God. She wanted to help the ministers of God (verse 15). Faithful comes from a word meaning “to be trustworthy, sure and true.” Lydia knew she had the responsibility to be faithful to God. That need for faithfulness has passed on to every generation of believers since that day.

Historically, Baptists have been faithful to the Lord. Multitudes of Baptists have remained “faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10). One book that traces the line of Baptist churches all the way back to Christ is entitled *The Trail of Blood*. This title is appropriate because Baptists in every century have suffered for the cause of Christ. Baptists faithfully served God and suffered because of it.

This lesson revolves around the theme of faithfulness. It will examine the true source and example of faithfulness in God Himself. It will give examples of those who were faithful for the

cause of Christ. Finally, each present-day believer will receive the challenge to faithfulness in his life. The need is great, but the rewards for faithfulness are greater. Each student should determine to be faithful to God no matter what the opposition.

1. _____ The Example of God

Where can we find a perfect example of faithfulness? The greatest example of faithfulness comes from God Himself. He is the beginning of all things and is the greatest example of faithfulness available.

His faithfulness was revealed early in the Bible. Jacob had left the land of his birth and was traveling to his ancestral home to find a wife. He met with God at a place he called Beth-el. God promised Jacob that He would bless him greatly and bring him back to his native land. Though Jacob was gone for twenty years, God did bring him safely home. God blessed Jacob tremendously while he was away. God is always faithful.

Many Old Testament Scriptures point out the faithfulness of God. When Moses was old and facing death, he reminded the people of Israel of God's Law. God had faithfully served the nation by providing people's needs for forty years. Now that provision was nearing an end because they were approaching the Promised Land. In those final instructions to the people, Moses called Him "the faithful God" (Deut. 7:9). The psalmist David gave a comparison of God and mankind. Man was full of sin but God's "faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds" (Psalm 36:5). Jeremiah wrote and ministered at a time when the Israelites faced a terrible future. Seventy years of captivity were coming. Facing such trying times, Jeremiah wrote about the faithfulness of God (Lam. 3:23). Many other Old Testament Scriptures declare the faithfulness of God.

The New Testament also proclaims God's faithfulness. Paul simply stated that "God is faithful" (1 Cor. 1:9). He challenged the church at Thessalonica to be faithful because the One who called them was faithful (1 Thess. 5:24). The writer of Hebrews declared the faithfulness of God by comparing His promises to "an anchor of the soul" (Heb. 6:19). Because He keeps His promises, He is the anchor for the soul. Peter taught about the faith-

fulness of God by asserting that He always keeps His promises (2 Peter 3:9). God truly is faithful.

God stands as the greatest example of faithfulness available. Never has God made a promise that He has not or will not keep. He promised eternal salvation. That is what He gives. He promised to return. Someday He will. He is faithful.

2. _____ The Experience of Bible Saints

While God stands as the prime example of faithfulness, He has given biblical examples of people who have been faithful to God and their fellowman. These examples should encourage God's children today to be honest and trustworthy in their lives.

The writer of Hebrews directed his thoughts toward the Jewish Christians of his day. To encourage them to greater commitment, he drew examples from the Old Testament of others who had faithfully served God. One of his examples was Moses. He declared that "Moses was faithful in all his house" (Heb. 3:2). The idea was that Moses received direction from God and then faithfully fulfilled his responsibility. The work was great and the pressures were often overwhelming, but Moses remained faithful to God (verse 5).

The Text described Lydia and her desire to serve God by serving God's people. "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there" (Acts 16:15). Lydia was apparently wealthy, but she was not concerned with anything other than the opportunity she had to serve God. She was faithful and provided for the missionary team of Paul and Silas.

Paul was also an example of faithfulness. He understood God had called him to a work. "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry" (1 Tim. 1:12). He declared that his faithfulness was not dependent on some intrinsic ability he had. He realized that anything he accomplished came about because God had enabled him to do it. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

The Bible has so many examples of people who were faithful in service to God. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews lists and

describes many saints who were faithful to God. Let those saints be a challenge in our lives.

3. _____ The Encouragement for Today

Observing biblical examples of faithfulness should encourage church members today. People also have examples from personal experiences. It might be a pastor who faithfully served God through the years. It might be a dear saint who served the Lord through a New Testament church. It could be associational leaders who left examples of faithfulness. All of these serve to encourage church members to grow in their faithfulness to God.

Believers should be committed to God's Word. The Bible is far more than a collection of the good sayings of man. It is the very Word of God. The Bible was given "that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:17). As the Word of God, the Bible is worthy to be studied. If a person wants to know how to serve God, the answer is in the Bible. If he wants to know the meaning of life, the answer is in the Bible. A person must spend time studying its pages so he can know what he should do in life. Believers should be committed to the Word of God.

Children of God should be committed to God's churches. How important is the church Jesus established? It is so important that Jesus was willing to shed His blood for it (Acts 20:28). It should have that same importance in the lives of God's children today. Too many people think little of a church. They think it to be a place to go when there is nothing else to do. Your church is where you will give God the glory due His name (Eph. 3:21). Do not think you can adequately serve God apart from a church. That attitude shows no faithfulness to God or His church. Every saved person should be a member of a New Testament church and should be faithful in service to it.

The examples given in the Bible should encourage believers today to be fully committed to God. When people place more importance on worldly things than on the work of God, their priorities are misplaced. Each church member has been called to a life of faithfulness.

Conclusion

How does your faithfulness compare to those who have gone before? First, compare your faithfulness to that of God. He is the prime example of all things. God is trustworthy and true. How do you compare to Him? Take it a level lower. Compare your faithfulness to that of biblical saints. These were people who loved the Lord and were willing to give all for His glory. How do you compare to them? Let us take it down yet another level. Compare your faithfulness to other believers with those who helped to influence you for Christ. How do you compare?

We often compare ourselves to others and wonder why we do not stack up against them. While people who have gone before can be a great encouragement to us, we are not responsible to be like them. We are only responsible to do what God has called us to do. The question to ask now is, am I being faithful to God's call in my life? If you are not being faithful, begin right now to follow His commands. You will be glad you did.

Baptist Heritage and the Word of God

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will discuss the importance of the Word of God today.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

Background Scripture: Psalm 119:11, 17, 18; Isaiah 8:20;

Luke 10:26; John 5:39; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.

Devotional Reading: Study the Word, 2 Timothy 2:15.

Introduction

The Bible is the Word of God. Would Baptists ever question the validity of that statement? Modern day believers have gone the way of the world. Some in the past had the desire to question all things. It did not matter how long the principles had been accepted as truth, everything would be questioned. Rather than accepting the Bible as the indisputable Word of God, they began to doubt their faith. Because they had opened the lines of doubt, soon a full rejection of the Bible as the Word of God followed. No longer was the Bible accepted as fully inspired and infallible.

This process reminds one of what happened between Eve and the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Satan asked Eve, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen. 3:1). The way he worded his question would make a person assume that God was trying to restrict His creation. In every restriction God places on man, He does so for man's benefit, yet, Satan used this tactic to get Eve to doubt God's word and character. When he succeeded in getting her to doubt God's word, he

proceeded actively to deny God's warning. "Ye shall not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). Satan wants people to doubt and deny that the Bible is the Word of God. If he can raise doubts, it will be a matter of time until he causes the person to deny God's Word.

This lesson will focus on three primary ideas. First, it will show why the Bible really is reliable and trustworthy. Then, the lesson will describe what the individual can gain from a study of the Bible. Finally, the lesson will trace the historical view of Baptists concerning the Word of God. Saints today should believe the Bible is the Word of God.

1. _____ The Basis of Biblical Truth
How can a person really know that the Bible is the Word of God? Too many people have decided to take the Bible as a good book of morals. The Bible is a good book, but it is far more than that. It is the Word of God.

The Bible claims to be the Word of God. The Text declares all Scriptures to be inspired, or God-breathed. God is the source of the writings in the Bible. Peter described this process as "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). Moved by is a picture word describing a sailboat being carried along by the wind. It does not move by its own power but by the power of the wind. Men did not write the Bible by their own power. They were carried along by the power of God through the Holy Spirit. Why is this important? If men wrote words they thought would be helpful to other people, they would make mistakes. Try to imagine the forty men who contributed to the Bible over about fifteen centuries. These men were from different eras, different social levels, different occupations and different geographical areas. How could they have maintained such a cohesive unit as the Bible without some outside help? The Bible is far more than the writings of men. It is the Word of God.

Prophecies prove the message of the Bible to be from God. The Old Testament is full of prophecies. From early in its pages until the last words, God gave prophecies of future events. It has been estimated that approximately two thousand Old Testament prophecies have already been fulfilled. Some people claim that the prophecies in the Old Testament are so ambiguous that they could be applied to almost anything. Isaiah proph-

esied that a man named Cyrus would grant permission for Jerusalem and the Temple to be rebuilt (Isa. 44:28). This was prophesied before either the city or the Temple had been destroyed and was one hundred seventy-five years before its fulfillment. That does not sound ambiguous or uncertain. The book of Daniel is so precise in its prophecies of future world powers that modern day liberals have decided that it was not written until after those events happened. What is peculiar about that claim is that the Old Testament (including the book of Daniel) was translated into Greek (the Septuagint) before some of the predictions were fulfilled. Fulfilled prophecies prove the Bible is from God.

The Bible is far more than a collection of the best writings of man. The Bible came from the heart of God to the hand of man. It is infallible and cannot be denied. The Bible is the Word of God.

2. _____ The Benefits of Biblical Authority

Some people think the Bible is good for church services but has little importance in everyday life. God declared the Bible to be beneficial in many areas.

The Bible declares the only way of salvation. The Scriptures gave Timothy the understanding of salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). Jesus declared that the Scriptures spoke of Him (John 5:39). He is the only way of life (John 14:6). Nowhere in the pages of God's Word is another plan of salvation given. Whether in the Old or New Testament, the way of salvation is by grace through faith. The Word of God is beneficial because it reveals God's plan of salvation.

The Bible points out how a person can deal with sin in his life. The Text showed that it was profitable for "reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). The Word of God points out sin in a person's life. It shows how that sin can be forgiven and how evil conduct can be replaced with righteous living. How can a person know what to do with sinful behavior? The Bible helps with that information. "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11).

The Bible also equips a person for service to God. "That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good

works” (2 Tim. 3:17). God wants His children to grow spiritually. The word perfect points toward the spiritual maturity God desires. The Bible helps a person understand God’s will for his life. Peter encouraged saints to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). The Word of God will help the child of God become a capable servant of the King.

The Bible is relevant today. It was not just intended for people in previous centuries. Its pages are filled with information that will help a person know God’s will for his life. The Word of God is alive and vital (Heb. 4:12). God’s instructions for daily living are found in the Bible.

3. _____ The Background of Biblical Trust

Baptists have always stood for the inspiration of the Bible. In spite of great opposition, they faithfully proclaimed the Bible to be the Word of God.

The Paulicians (a group through whom conservative Baptists trace their roots) were a group of churches that existed from the seventh century until the sixteenth century. They were strong in their belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures. They prized the Bible. While they accepted the entire Bible as inspired, they were particular toward the writings of Paul (I. K. Cross, *The Battle for Baptist History*, pages 99-104). They would never have denied the validity of the Bible.

The Waldenses (another group in the Baptist line) were a group of churches that spread through much of Europe. They firmly believed the Bible to be the Word of God. The Anabaptists (immediate forerunners of Baptists) also proclaimed their faith in the Scriptures. Many other groups through whom modern, conservative Baptists trace their roots also trusted the Bible. One group (the Donatists) refused to recognize a pastor at Carthage because he was willing to surrender the Scriptures to authorities rather than suffer persecution.

Is it really important for churches to maintain this trust in the Bible? If the Bible is not the Word of God, then what is the basis for doctrine? Without an inspired book, it really does not matter what a person believes. History proves that conservative Baptists always stood for the Bible as the Word of God.

Conclusion

Historically, Baptist churches stood firm on the inspiration of the Bible. In more recent times, some Baptists groups have decided that it is better to gain worldly acceptance than to stand for thus saith the Lord. They do not want to stand firm on truth. Instead, they want to allow each person to believe what he wants. While that sounds really tolerant, it is an ungodly attitude. The Lord went to the Temple and physically drove out the thieving moneychangers. That was not tolerant, but He was doing the Father's will. It will be better for members of Baptist churches to stand for the Bible than to be accepted by the world. The Bible declares that if we are friends with the world, we are the enemies of Christ (James 4:4).

Baptist Heritage and the Godhead

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will understand what is meant by the terms God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Matthew 3:16, 17.

Background Scripture: Acts 17:28-31; Romans 1:20-23;
Colossians 2:9-11; 1 John 5:7.

Devotional Reading: The Mystery of Godliness, 1 Timothy
3:16.

Introduction

This lesson focuses upon an important, yet difficult subject about the Trinity of God. Some people are confused about what Baptists mean by the doctrine of the Trinity. They think Baptists believe in three separate gods. That is simply not true. Baptists believe in one God who manifests Himself in three separate and distinct ways. Trinity simply means "a unity of three in one." That is what Baptists believe concerning God. He is one God who shows Himself as three separate persons.

During this lesson the student will examine several aspects of the doctrine of the Trinity. He will learn that though the word trinity is not found in the Scriptures, the principle of this doctrine is clearly taught. The goal of this lesson is to understand what Baptists have always believed concerning God and His character. This can be an encouraging and challenging study.

1. _____ Identifying the Trinity

The Text gives an example of a time when each person of the Trinity was in one place at one time. Jesus was baptized. As He

was coming out of the water, the Holy Spirit came down upon Him in the form of a dove. At the same time the voice of the Father spoke from Heaven placing His approval on this act of the Son. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). At this time, each person of God was doing separate and distinct tasks. This reveals one God who manifests Himself in three separate ways.

Other Scriptures reveal the individual identities of the Triune God. When Jesus was preparing to ascend, He gave instruction to His disciples. This included instructions on baptism. He told the church to baptize "them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19). The three persons of God were clearly detailed in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. This Scripture did not place more importance on one over the others. Each had equal place.

Later, John wrote words to identify the persons of God. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" (1 John 5:7). Here the three persons of God were given by these names: the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost. Why were the names different? Two of the three were identified by the same titles. It was the second person in the Godhead that seemed to be different. In reality, they are the same. John's writings gave a special title to Jesus Christ, God the Son. That title was the Word. This was a particularly meaningful phrase. The "word of the LORD" came to Abraham declaring he would receive a son of promise (Gen. 15:1). God personified as "the word of the LORD" was also prominent in the writing of the Prophets. The Jews considered this phrase important to an understanding of God. John used that phrase as a title for Jesus. He identified the names of the Trinity

The Bible teaches the reality of the Trinity from the first words in its pages. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). The subject God of this sentence is plural in number. The verb of that sentence is singular. That would normally be incorrect syntax, yet in this case it is appropriate because God refers to the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is taught throughout the pages of the Bible.

2. _____ Illustrations of the Trinity

Seeking to understand the Trinity is a difficult task. The apostle Paul wrote words of encouragement to Timothy. “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness” (1 Tim. 3:16). While the task might be difficult, the student should always seek to understand more about God. This section will give simple (yet inadequate) illustrations of the Trinity.

Dr. B. H. Carroll compared the Trinity to the sun. God the Father is like the sun. God the Son would be like the sun’s light. God the Holy Spirit is like the sun’s heat. This illustration does much to show the work of the Trinity but does little to actually explain it. The problem with this illustration is that the light and heat is dependent on the sun. They do not exist separately and distinctly.

Dr. Ben M. Bogard described the Trinity in terms of building. God the Father is the Master Designer of the universe; that is, He is the originator of the universe. God the Son is the Master Builder of the universe. Paul said Jesus was the One who did the work of creation (Col. 1:16). God the Holy Spirit is the Manager of the universe. He works to direct its paths. Each had a special and distinct work in the universe.

These illustrations do little to actually explain the intricate details of the Trinity. This could not be fully accomplished even if this entire book were devoted to it. The illustrations only serve to draw the student a little closer to such a great God.

3. _____ Important Work of the Trinity

The work of the Trinity is important for Christians to understand. What is the work of each person of the Trinity in salvation? Part of this work was shown in 2 Corinthians 13:14, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”

The work of salvation began in the mind of God in eternity past. Even before the creation of the earth and its population, God determined the plan of salvation. It begins with the willingness of God the Father to give His ultimate possession, His only begotten Son. What a tremendous sacrifice that must have been! Most fathers would gladly take the suffering their sons must endure. The Father made the supreme sacrifice. He gave up His Son.

Jesus had the task of becoming the payment price for sins. “And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our’s only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). Natural man has no ability to achieve a right relationship with God. He always falls short of God’s glory. Jesus came as the sacrifice for sin. God became man so He could pay the price for sin. He suffered willingly to pay the price for sin.

The work of the Holy Spirit takes place each time a person is drawn to salvation. Jesus spoke of this work when He declared, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (John 6:44). It is the Spirit of God who draws people to the Lord. He convicts of sin so that they will understand their need. Once a person trusts in Jesus as Savior, it is the Holy Spirit who gives them life. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5).

God does a marvelous work in salvation. This is not a work of one person of the Trinity. The fullness of God works to produce salvation in the life of every believer.

Conclusion

If someone asked why you believe in the Trinity of God, what would you say? This is an important doctrine of our Baptist heritage. From as early as the second century after Christ, scriptural churches were declaring their belief in the Trinity of God. We must carefully study what the Bible says and take its statements as the basis for our teachings. Learn the work of God. Understand what God the Father does in the life of the believer. Study the wondrous ministry of God the Son. Examine the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. Praise Him for His wondrous character.

Baptist Heritage and the Second Coming

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will explain what they have learned concerning the second coming of Christ.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Acts 1:9-11.
Background Scripture: Matthew 26:64; Mark 13:26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 1 John 2:28; Revelation 1:7.
Devotional Reading: I Will Come Again, John 14:1-3.

Introduction

The picture given in the Text is quite amusing. The disciples had just witnessed the ascension of Jesus Christ. It must have been a tremendous sight. Possibly many of the readers have witnessed an enactment of this event. They knew that wires were hidden somewhere that enabled the actor to rise from the ground. When the event actually happened, Jesus did not rise from the ground because of some hidden wire. He physically rose through the sky until the clouds hid Him from view.

While the disciples continued to stare into the heavens, two men (angels) appeared in their midst and gave them words of admonition and encouragement. First, they asked why the disciples were staring into the heavens. What had taken place was over and they continued to look upward. They were not active in the Lord's business. They were wasting time. The angels also gave words of encouragement and challenge. This same Jesus would return for them some day. From that day forward, they were to live for the return of Jesus Christ.

Since the days of Christ, churches have anticipated the return of the Lord. The New Testament contains around three hundred eighteen references to this marvelous event. It has been suggested that one out of every seventeen verses of the entire Bible speaks of it. With this great amount of coverage in the Bible, the return of Christ to the earth must be an important event. This lesson will endeavor to give challenging information about the second coming of Jesus Christ.

1. _____ The Events Warning of His Return

On one occasion during the earthly ministry of Jesus, He and the disciples were at the Temple. The disciples got overly enthused about the building they were in. They bragged on the beauty and strength of the Temple. Jesus turned to them and declared that the Temple would be torn stone from stone. The building would be thrown down (Matt. 24:2). That statement perplexed the disciples. They could not imagine the Temple being destroyed without the entire world coming to an end. When they arrived at the Mount of Olives, the disciples privately asked Jesus for an explanation of what He had said about the Temple. "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (verse 3). They wanted to know what the future held. Jesus proceeded to answer their question. In so doing, He gave information that is vital to an understanding of the events preceding the second coming of Jesus.

Jesus began His discussion concerning end-time events with matters He called "the beginning of sorrows" (verse 8). This indicates these events would occur just prior to the beginning of the Tribulation Period. What were His warnings? First, He warned of false religion (verse 5). The number would increase as the time of His return came. Has that happened today? The fastest growing religion in the world is not some branch of Christianity. It is Islam. Fanatical religious groups spring up everywhere. One such group claims the human race began because of extraterrestrials doing cloning experiments. They use this belief to justify their attempts to clone human beings. False religions and false Christs spring up everywhere. Jesus warned that their words were deceptive.

Jesus warned about wars and rumors of wars. Someone might rightly declare that wars have always existed. Jesus described wars between nations and kingdoms (verse 7). The word for nations here is *ethnos*. This indicates at least some of these wars will come from ethnic differences. Not too long ago certain countries in Europe began a series of internal conflicts between groups of ethnic differences. They were all Europeans, but they were of different religions. Therefore, they felt the need to annihilate the other group. In the Sudan, one group (Muslim extremists) has begun enslaving Christians because of their difference. They are racially the same. Their difference is religious. The Lord warned that these wars and rumors of wars would escalate nearing His return. As the writer of this lesson pens these words, the United States faces the potential of war on two fronts. The Lord warned of wars and rumors of wars.

Jesus also warned of the spread of sin. "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (verse 12). No one can deny the prevalence of sin in the world. What is worse still is that sin greatly infiltrates the churches. The time has come when the moral stand of the churches is similar to that of the world. Many churches are afraid to stand against immorality. In some countries it is illegal for anyone to speak openly against such sin as homosexuality. Canada has a law declaring such speech to be a hate crime. Because sin is so prevalent in society, the love of many has truly grown cold. It is more difficult to find people who are fully dedicated to God. Most people think they are on fire for God if they are willing to come to church on Sunday morning. Sin is common today and love for God's work is unusual.

2. _____ The Expectation of His Return

The New Testament uses a special word to describe the believer's anticipation of the second coming of Jesus. It is the word *hope*. It has been defined as "the expectation of future good." What is the hope of the child of God?

Jesus is coming soon. The child of God should have great confidence in that understanding. This knowledge should awaken us to the fact that each person will stand before Jesus as the righteous judge. John warned that the child of God could face that day either with hope or fear. "And now, little children,

abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (1 John 2:28). The key to a positive attitude toward the return of Christ is to abide in Him. What does this mean? God’s people should stop relying on the world. They should stop focusing on the things of the world. When Christ is in control of the individual, then the person is abiding in Christ. This is the way to approach the second coming of Christ with confidence instead of fear and shame.

When the individual has lived his life according to the directions of God, he has the hope of rewards in that day. Paul wrote about the crowns faithful Christians could obtain. He wrote that the Thessalonian church members would be his crown of rejoicing when Christ came as the judge (1 Thess. 2:19). Paul also declared that he would gain a crown of righteousness because he loved the return of the Lord (2 Tim. 4:8). These were not crowns exclusively reserved for Paul. All who meet the standards of Christ will receive rewards. They will hear the Master proclaim, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21).

While the believer has a special expectation for the future, the Lord also has an expectation for His disciples. He has the right to expect the children of God to do the work they have been given. Luke gave a parable of a master going into a far country (Luke 19:12-26). He delivered his goods to his servants and commanded them, “Occupy till I come.” This meant they were to go about business in a profitable way until the day the master returned for an accounting. The purpose of this parable is clear. We are the servants left with the work of the Master. He has commanded us, “Occupy till I come.” We must carry on the work of Christ until the day He returns. He has the right to expect this of us.

There is a marvelous expectation for those who are in Christ. Those who have never been saved do not have that anticipation. They are lost and are headed toward hell. What a challenge to prepare for the future by trusting in Christ as personal Savior.

Conclusion

Jesus is coming soon. Are you prepared for that day? If you have never been saved, you are definitely not prepared to stand

before the Lord the righteous judge. You should trust in Him as Savior today. Then you will become a child of God. You have an expectation of future good.

If you are a child of God, are you ready to stand before the Lord? John said believers will stand before Jesus in that day either in confidence or in shame. It all depends on whether they have lived for Christ. Sadly, some children of God will stand before Christ with bitter tears because they wasted their time on earth. Do not be one of them. Begin living for Christ today.