

THE MEANING OF OUR BAPTISM IN JESUS NAME

Baptism cuts us off from this world

Genesis 17:14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

It was water that cut off Noah from the sinful world - permanently. The will of our God Jesus Christ is to cut his people off permanently from this world of sin, and he has ordained the waters of baptism in his name to accomplish this purpose. This first chapter is a call to Christians who have been baptized in Jesus name to remember the great significance of their baptism. As long as we are in this world, we will need to go back to the beginning and understand the foundations of our faith in order to continue on the path to heaven more determinedly. While baptized Christians are the intended audience, our prayer is for those who have not been baptized in Jesus name to join us in this journey to understand one of the great pillars of salvation and make an enlightened decision to be baptized in the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Cutting off the umbilical cord of earthly attachment

We will study the meaning of baptism in the life of the man who embodied baptism uniquely, father Abraham. We are the children of Abraham, according to the apostle Paul, through baptism in Jesus name; hence, we must carefully consider the life of this great man of God.

Gal 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Gal 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The story of baptism begins concretely with the call of Abraham. We can all see that God wishes us to understand baptism as demonstrated in the life of Abraham. To begin with, he was commanded to “cut himself off” from his country and family. “Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee” (Genesis 12:1). The above emphasizes the importance of making a decisive break with one's past, from sin into the kingdom of God. When the call of Jesus Christ comes into one's life, God expects us to “get thee out” from the relations and places that will hinder us from the plan of God.

Native Americans traditionally bury the umbilical cord and placenta of the baby in the place where the child is born to establish a permanent connection with that place, but Christians must cut off the spiritual umbilical cord of Adam and reject any spiritual attachment to the earth. However, may we never be cut off from the umbilical cord of Jesus! Just as the midwife cuts off the umbilical cord that attaches a newborn baby to the mother, the child of Jesus Christ must cut off all attachments to this sinful world. Have you ever seen a ten-year-old child still attached to his mother through the umbilical cord? If this seems absurd and contrary to nature, how can Christians still attach themselves to this sinful world and expect to grow as in the Lord? Let us cut off the umbilical cord of the world today in Jesus name! Consider Abraham's steadfastness in rejecting any suggestion to return to the land of his birth.

Genesis 24:5 And the servant said unto him, *Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?*

Genesis 24:6 And Abraham said unto him, *Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.*

Are we living in the same spirit of focus as Abraham? Have the relations and places we first left for Jesus returned again into our lives? Do we not see how they are weakening and extinguishing the passion we once exhibited in our relationship with Jesus Christ? Come, let us cut off the umbilical cord which we did not cut off in the beginning! Let us bury it permanently! Let us catch up with father Abraham and journey with him!

Cutting off the name – from Abram to Abraham

Genesis 17:5 *Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.*

In addition to being cut off from his native place and relations, God now cut off Abraham from his old name, Abram, which meant “high father”. Abraham decided to be the father of the people of God, and not a high father for himself alone. Pagans often gave strange names to their children. “And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran” (Genesis 11:26). Nahor means “snorer” and Haran (the one who climbs mountains). Abram carried his proud name for seventy-five years. It should come as no surprise that Abram was the first man whose name was changed, not by humans, but by God himself. As mentioned previously, Abraham was the first to concretely embody the meaning of baptism. Baptism is a call to die to Adam and the past; all the former things pass away and everything becomes new – including a new name.

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

The enemy of your soul will always remind you of your past; he wants to take you back to your past and hold you captive to your former weaknesses and struggles. The people who knew the Lord Jesus as a child were unable to know him as God and savior because they limited their perception of the Lord through their earthly understanding of his past. “And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?” (John 6:42). Do not believe what the world will say about you after you have been baptized in Jesus name! When they insist on calling you Abram, you must insist on being called Abraham! When they say Jesus is from the flesh and blood of Mary, we must insist that he is the Word made flesh (John 1:14) and the Son of God (Matthew 16:16). When they say that you used to engage in bad behavior, insist that all things have become new. Even if God has not yet changed your behavior and past, you must believe it by faith – just as Abram received the name Abraham by faith before Isaac was born.

Romans 4:19 *And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:*

Romans 4:20 *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;*

Romans 4:21 *And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.*

Romans 4:22 *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.*

Cutting off temptations that compromise salvation

In addition to being cut off from his country, family and old name, Abraham refused to entangle himself with the offers and seduction from the people around him. Always remember that sin ultimately requires nothing less than our salvation. This is encapsulated in the words of the Devil as he tempted the Lord: “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:9). To be baptized in Jesus name implies an open declaration that one is cut off from dependence upon any person or system that will compromise our salvation.

Genesis 14:22 *And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,*

Genesis 14:23 *That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich.*

Abraham knew that the king of Sodom would first offer him money and material possessions before demanding his soul. He also knew that his nephew, Lot, had made a bad

decision in settling down in Sodom (Genesis 13). Doing business with Sodom means entering into binding relations with people who were immoral and indifferent to God's commandments. Why is it that elite university fraternities and sororities demand that new members engage in sinful practices (called hazing) involving drugs, alcohol abuse and violent forms of bullying? Like Satan, they promise access to unique privileges for those who are willing to compromise their salvation. Abraham had a zero tolerance policy towards such offers – he cut himself off from Sodom and Gomorrah. Even when the king of Sodom was indebted to him for rescuing him, Abraham refused to touch his possessions. It is for the same reason that Mordechai refused to bow to Haman: he knew the man was evil and was capable of the first Holocaust way before Hitler.

***Esther 3:2** And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.*

Saints of God, how is your relation with the world? I trust it is not one of sinful dependence! Baptism has cut us off from the king of Sodom – return to total dependence in the Lord Jesus Christ, as our father Abraham has shown us! Are you in a relation which God has forbidden? Break it off now! Are you engaged in a business which does not glorify the Lord Jesus – kill it before it kills you! Was it Abraham who taught us to call God “Jehovah Jireh?” Let Jesus Christ be your provider!

***Genesis 22:14** And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.*

Cut off Adam and put on Christ

Abraham received almost nothing from humans, but he gladly expected and received great blessings from God. “And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God” (Genesis 14:18). The bread and wine represented the coming heavenly flesh of Jesus Christ and his blood. Since Abraham was the first to cut off Adam, he was also the first to receive of the bread and wine – the tokens of the body of God with which we shall be clothed in baptism. May God teach us to value his promises and blessings more than life itself! In submitting himself to the covenant of circumcision, Abraham openly preached the doctrine of baptism in Jesus name. His foreskin pointed to the fullness of the nature of Adam – and in cutting it off, he cut off all ties and connections to Adam.

Genesis 17:23 *And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him.*

Note that Abraham executed the order of God the same day. The understanding of the importance of baptism will lead to quick and decisive action. “(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)” (2 Corinthians 6:2). The word “covenant” actually means to cut or divide in two. In the old days, the two parties involved in the covenant would walk in the middle of their sacrifice/offering to seal the terms of the covenant. We see this in the life of Abraham when he wanted assurance of his ownership of the land of Canaan.

Genesis 15:10 *And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not.*

Genesis 15:17 *And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.*

Genesis 15:18 *In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.*

It was in the division of the sacrifice that Abraham received confirmation of his ownership of the land of Canaan. In baptism in Jesus name, we offer our bodies on the altar of the water. Jesus himself comes and divides this sacrifice – he cuts off the inheritance and nature of Adam. Next, he gives us his own heavenly body and nature as Paul writes in Galatians 3:27 (put on Christ). This is how we know we will inherit heaven – God has divided us from Adam!

In summary, this first chapter considered the meaning of baptism in Jesus name as an act of cutting off the ties that bind us to a world of sin. Abraham teaches us to cut off the umbilical cord that binds us to our earthly origins that we may find the perfect will of God. Just as Abram received a new name, Abraham, baptism in Jesus name bestows a blessed new name. Next, Abraham's life reveals a man who refused to compromise his salvation by making no covenants with the powers around him, such as the king of Sodom – the world will demand nothing less than our salvation. Finally, and most beautifully, Abraham cut off his foreskin the same day because he knew God would give him a new, heavenly body. We cut off Adam to put on Christ! Let us celebrate the meaning of our baptism in Jesus name afresh!