

It is more profitable to know Jesus than to know about Him.

Weekly Edition – January 29, 2016

First Letter of Saint Peter

Suffering for Doing Good

⁸ Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. ⁹ Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For,

*"Whoever would love life
and see good days
must keep their tongue from evil
and their lips from deceitful speech.*

¹¹ *They must turn from evil and do good;
they must seek peace and pursue it.*

¹² *For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous
and his ears are attentive to their prayer,
but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."*

¹³ *Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened." ¹⁵ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. ¹⁷ For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. ¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. ¹⁹ After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—²⁰ to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹ and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.*

Baptism Saves Us

- 1) Verse 21 is the clearest statement in the New Testament that baptism brings salvation to believers.
- 2) Baptism is not only a sign of forgiveness and renewal, but an instrument of grace that actually regenerates. (John 3:5 and Titus 3:5)
- 3) The word translated here as "symbolizes" is *antitypos* means "the fulfillment of a type." Hence the flood of Noah's day is a *type* of baptism – the raging waters that cleansed the earth of wickedness (Genesis 7:17-24) prefigure the sacramental waters that cleanse the believer of sin. (Acts 2:38 & 22:16)
- 4) In both cases, the water that brings judgment on sin is also the water that saves.
- 5) We see great parallels between the story of Noah and our salvation in the sacrament of baptism:
 - a) Noah and his family built the ark in faith, and passed through the waters of judgment unharmed into a new life and new covenant with God.

Outline of 1st Peter

1. **Opening Remarks** (1:1-2)
2. **Dignity of the Christian Life**
 - a. New birth in Christ (1:3-9)
 - b. Testimony of the Prophets (1:10-12)
 - c. Be Holy Yourselves (1:13-2:3)
 - d. Christ the Living Stone (2:4-10)
3. **Duties of the Christian Life**
 - a. Civil duties of the Saints (2:11-17)
 - b. Suffering like Christ (2:18-25)
 - c. Household duties of the Saints (3:1-7)
 - d. Moral duties of the Saints (3:8-12)
4. **Difficulties of Christian Persecution**
 - a. Conduct during Persecution (3:13-22)
 - b. Living for the Last Days (4:1-11)
 - c. Suffering and Christian Glory (4:12-19)
 - d. Shepherds and the Flock (5:1-5)
 - e. Humility and Vigilance (5:6-11)
5. **Closing Benediction**

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- b) Likewise, baptism is the sacrament of faith (Mark 16:16) that brings us new life (Romans 6:4) and makes us members of a new covenant. (Jeremiah 31:31, 33)
- 6) Baptism is not an outward removing of dirt from the body, but an inward removing of sin from the soul. (Hebrews 10:22)
- 7) Peter says that through our baptism we make an "appeal" to God. The word is *eperōtēma* and it means a "craving, an intense desire, or earnestly seeking." In secular Greek of the day it meant the formal acceptance of a contract or covenant using solemn words, with the appropriate party pledging compliance with the terms and conditions of the contract.
 - a) God pledges forgiveness of sins through our baptismal covenant and He will not break the terms and conditions of His contract; and
 - b) Man pledges to maintain a clear conscience by living according to the Gospel – loving the Lord our God with all our strength, loving our neighbor as ourselves; picking up our cross daily to "Follow Me" - that is if we live by faith.

Recounting The Waters of Noah's Flood as a Type

- 1) From Genesis we learn that in the days of Noah the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence.
 - a) The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways.
 - b) Scripture tells us that the Lord regretted that He had made human beings on the earth, and His heart was deeply troubled. On account of the evil and wickedness of man, He resolved to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them.
 - c) Yet Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he and his three sons walked faithfully with God.
 - d) The Lord instructed Noah to build an ark, saying to him, "*I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you.*" (Genesis 6:17)
 - e) Upon completing construction, according to God's word, pairs of every kind of clean and unclean creature on the earth entered the ark. On the seventh day the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened and rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights covering the highest mountains to a depth of more than 15 cubits.
 - f) Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left and those with him in the ark. The waters covered the earth for 150 days.
 - g) Noah sent out a dove from the ark, and when the dove returned to him in the evening with a freshly plucked olive leaf in its beak, Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth.

Recounting the Waters of Christ's Baptism

- 1) *In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea² and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."³ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him.'"* (Matthew 3:1-3)
- 2) *Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?"¹⁵ Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.* (Matthew 3:13-15)

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- 3) ¹⁶ *As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased."* (Matthew 3:16-17)

Layers of Symbolism in the Flood Waters

- 1) The flood waters of Noah cleansed the earth of all unrighteousness as the evil and wicked people of his day were put to death in those waters, but the faithful Noah and his family were saved through those same waters.
- 2) In the waters of baptism our old sinful and fallen nature is put to death and we rise again in newness of life in Jesus Christ. This is an interior death that leads to a spiritual rebirth.

The Dove's Sign

- 1) The dove is a sign: A dove, with an olive-branch in its beak, announced to Noah that the flood had receded and God's judgment had passed. Likewise, when Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River a dove revealed that the world's shipwreck is at an end forever. The promised Savior has come.
- 2) The dove's olive-branch foreshadowed the sweet fragrance of Christ the Lord over the floodwaters to Noah; now the Holy Spirit, descending in the likeness of a dove, reveals the sweet fragrance of Jesus to the world.
- 3) Observe the branch in the dove's beak. The sign is no longer an olive-shoot of the old stock: but a fresh shoot from the stump of Jesse. (Isaiah 11:1)

Christ, The Fountainhead is Submerged

- 1) That Jesus would be baptized by John is surely a cause for amazement and wonder:
 - a) How is it that *the* "River whose streams make glad the city of God" (Psalm 46:4) would be bathed in the poor little stream? How can it be that the Fountainhead who gives life to all men would be immersed in the shallow waters of this transient world?
 - b) Christ is not baptized to be made holy by water, but rather to make the water holy. By His cleansing, the waters of this earth are purified and made fit for baptizing in His name. In His baptism He consecrates the earth anew.
 - c) This Lamb of God who is now baptized by John is Fire, as John testified when he said, "*I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes One who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*" (Matthew 3:11)
 - d) We have seen this Fire before – also as a type:
 - i) It covered the tabernacle as Scripture testifies: "*On the day the tabernacle, the tent of the covenant law, was set up, the cloud covered it. From evening till morning the cloud above the tabernacle looked like fire.*" (Numbers 9:15)
 - ii) This too is the column of fire that went before the sons of Israel through the Red Sea so that they could follow on their brave journey as they fled the wickedness of Egypt – also a type of baptism.
 - (a) As the column of fire went through those waters first, dividing them, to prepare a path for God's children, even now, Jesus Christ who is Light descends into the Jordan in the column of His body to prepare the way for God's children, saying: "*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*" (John 14:6)
 - (2) At the time of the Exodus the column of fire provided light for the people who followed; now Christ gives light to the hearts of believers.
 - iii) This is the same fire from which God spoke to Moses from the bush. (Exodus 3:2)

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- e) In Christ's baptism, the Holy Spirit pours out on His head the full richness of a new anointing by the Father, to fulfill what the psalmist had prophesied: *"You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has set You above Your companions by anointing You with the oil of joy."* (Psalm 45:7)

Renewed by Water and the Spirit

- 1) Jesus, the only-begotten Son receives the Spirit, but not for His own advantage, for the Spirit is His, and is given in Him and through Him. Yet by receiving the Spirit as man, Jesus sanctifies our human nature, making it possible for us, through the sacrament of baptism, to receive the Holy Spirit.
 - a) He receives the Holy Spirit to renew our nature entirely, making it whole again.
 - b) Hence Jesus makes this promise to us: *"But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."* (John 14:26)
- 2) God the Father sent His immortal Son – the Word – into the world to cleanse us with "water and the Spirit." (John 3:5)
 - a) Jesus is the new deluge – far greater and more important than the flood of Noah's day. Then the floodwater destroyed the human race, but now the water of baptism has recalled the dead to new life by the power of the One who was baptized by John in the Jordan.
 - b) As the deluge of Noah's day covered the face of the whole earth, so in the deluge of baptism the greatness of Jesus reaches to the ends of the earth. (Micah 5:4)
 - c) Those waters brought death; these waters bring life.
 - d) In the waters of baptism, we are born again by water and the Spirit. This Jesus explained to Nicodemus, saying, *"⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷ You should not be surprised at my saying, You must be born again. ⁸ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."* (John 3:6-8)
 - e) *Through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set us free from the law of sin and death.* (Romans 8:2)
 - f) Whoever goes down into these waters of rebirth with faith renounces the devil and pledges himself to Christ.
 - g) By descending into these waters we repudiate the enemy and confess that Jesus Christ is God; by ascending from these waters we throw off our bondage and servitude to sin and are raised to the status of sons of God and co-heirs with Christ.

The Mystery

- 1) Jesus, Son of the Father, who fills all creation, leaving no place voided of His presence, He who is incomprehensible to the angels and hidden from the sight of man, came to be baptized because it was His will:
 - a) Though hungry Himself, Jesus feeds thousands;
 - b) Though weary Himself, Jesus refreshes those who labor;
 - c) Though He has no place to lay His head, yet all creation is in His hand;
 - d) By His passion, Jesus frees us from our passions;
 - e) By receiving the blows of man, Jesus gives the world liberty.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Why does it make a difference that we have been baptized?
- 2) What effect does our baptism have on the state of our conscience?