

The
**Symbols of Christ's
Death.**



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The Symbols of Christ's Death, and Scriptures thereon.



THERE is very often a greater difficulty in unlearning error than in acquiring truth. But in acquiring truth effectually, something in us has to be judged by the entry of the Word, which giveth light. What I mean by "effectually" is the getting it in a divine way, *i.e.*, not through the intelligence merely, but through the conscience.

Now, conscience is the divine railway for the Word into the soul. There is no other road. If it were the mind, it would be displacing God, because the mind judges, and that is God's right. The Word of God, being the revelation in you of what He is, when it brings you to judge all that is contrary to what it reveals, makes you morally like Him. But whenever the Word brings something to you which you did not know before, it finds an element in you that would take the place of judging, and kicks against it. Now, this something, whatever it may be, has to be judged by means of the Word itself, bringing you into fellowship with His judgment. This is conscience work. Then, and not till then, the Word has got hold of you, instead of you getting hold of the Word, because it reveals all

that is against Christ in you, as judged and put away on the Cross, and all that is for you in Christ as expressed by the agonies He endured. And thus it is that the Word handles you, not you the Word. Therefore, if this process be necessary to learn truth, *a fortiori*, to unlearn error.

Now, a system has been set up which is not found in the Word of God, a meaning having been given to baptism which Scripture does not warrant. Great confusion has arisen in the minds of many dear saints, who sincerely desire to know the truth, but accept a pure invention of the human mind, which asserts that baptism expresses the state of the baptised, instead of the Scriptural meaning, which is on the face of it, namely, "*sin in the flesh*," having been put out of God's sight, by judgment in Christ's death, baptism expresses the thing we are baptised to, which is not our own state, nor our own death, but Christ's death—to have part in Christ's death. ". . . So many of us as were baptised unto Jesus Christ were baptised unto His death." (Rom. vi. 3.)

From this delusive* stand-point, some dear people commence by asking you to give them a single Scripture which directly commands you to baptise your children. This appears plausible, but it is very deceptive, because Scripture never lays down in a single verse (*i.e.*, in so many words as a rule imposed, "for the letter killeth"

* **NOTE.**—Dear reader, to put the question in another way, can you place yourself in circumstances wherein you could say to anyone now, "Repent and be baptised for the remission of sins," or "Arise and be baptised and wash away thy sins"? No Baptist could honestly and consistently use these Scriptures to anyone under any circumstances. Why could he not do so? When his conscience is awakened by this question, he must see that there is some discordant element between his theory and God's Word; and he never will care to be set right until his conscience is awakened by Scripture to know that he has a theory in his mind that cannot stand its test.

It is a much more difficult thing to unlearn the wrong than to get hold of the right. Take the common Baptist view of that Scripture, in Gal. iii. 27: "For as many of you as have been baptised unto Christ have put on Christ." If you connect this necessarily with a soul passing or passed unto life or liberty, then the members of Christ have perished, for the "certain men crept in unawares," according to Jude, are lost. They had been baptised, and if "putting on Christ,"

—2 Cor. iii. 6) a moral principle which one ought to know from its whole testimony. And, moreover, Scripture never imposes as a legal obligation, which circumcision was, the thing that God concedes as a privilege, which baptism is. It has been often said to me, "Give me a single command for baptising your infant." I reply, "Give me a single command for Moses' breaking the two tables of stone, for his pitching the tabernacle outside the camp, or a Scripture for the Godhead of the Three Persons of the Trinity." You cannot find a *single* Scripture for one of these. Do I therefore doubt one of them? I have the concurrent testimony of Scripture for them; but I only bring them forward to show that the first principle upon which some loved saints unwittingly start, is an unscriptural and a false one.

Baptism means burial. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptised unto Jesus Christ were baptised unto His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him by baptism unto death." Observe, it does not say into Jesus Christ. Scripture uses the same word when it says, "baptised unto Moses." It says "unto" or "to" His death—*i.e.*, to have part in His death, and not because we have already had part in it. It is very remarkable that in those Scriptures just quoted (Rom. vi. 3, 4) God reverses the usual order twice, by putting burial first and death afterwards. Why is this? Surely God has some distinct reason for saying in the third verse, "baptised to His death," and in the fourth verse, "buried with Him by baptism unto death." In waiting patiently we learn His meaning. Burial is a declaration, not a condition; death a condition, not a declaration. Burial declares that the first man is neither fit for God's sight nor capable of being improved, so as to have any

In the Scripture referred to, be necessarily more than professions they who were quickened and made members of Christ's body are lost in the end. All this confusion arises from confounding the outward administration of ordinances with the action of the Spirit of God in quickening or delivering; and this is the very source of Popery and apostacy.

place whatever, either here or in heaven before God. Since the Second Man has been brought in, it must be displacement, not improvement, for there is no amalgamating the two. The first man, therefore, is set aside, and burial—putting out of sight—is the figure which *declares* this. Then death is that to which we are baptised: but mark well, it is to Christ's death, and to no one else's, as the Word says. We are not baptised to our own death at all, but we are baptised to have part in Christ's death: this is the positional thing, and if we come to the practical thing it is "always bearing about in the body the putting to death of the Lord Jesus." We are baptised to nothing less than this.

Let us now come to moral principles in all dispensations. And let me remind my reader that the moral ways of God are as unchangeable as His nature, let men say what they will.

The Spiritual mind understands that no change in a dispensation can make any alteration in the moral ways of God, and that He never allowed either fallen Adam or one of his children to approach Him save through the symbol of Christ's death which He Himself provided for man. Throughout the whole course of Scripture, God never deviates from this principle, either in the Old Testament or in the New. Adam and Eve had to appear, if before God, in garments obtained by death. Cain, as we know, brought an offering "unto the Lord" apart from a symbol which called God's attention to the death of Christ. Abel, on the contrary, put that which pointed to Christ's death between God and himself. Noah used a symbol of Christ's death for himself and his family. Abraham accepted circumcision for himself and his sons, which, God's Word tells us, pointed to the Cross of Christ, although then but a mark put upon the flesh of man, who was still under probation. (See Col. ii. 11.) "Circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of

Christ"—*i.e.*, the death of Christ.* Moses, evidently through the influence of his wife, failed to recognise this symbol in the case of his child until God met him in the inn (type of the world where he had left his child), and sought to kill him (Ex. iv. 24). Or, as I judge, He brought the sentence of death upon his soul. Job used the symbol of Christ's death for his sons (Job i. 5).

Look at another instance in the case of Hannah. In taking her child to present him to God, she brings three bullocks. God says, as it were, Do you mean it? I do, she says, and puts Christ's death in symbol before His eyes, and her child into His House. And if we follow down the whole line even to the Lord Jesus Himself, we shall find God's character always cared for by presenting children to Him in the symbol of Christ's death. And God's character never alters, although the DEVELOPMENT of His character does. Of course, in the case of the Lord, it was pure grace on His part even when He came into the children's place and was circumcised. He had come into association with people, although not into identity with their sins until the cross. Thus, in every instance, we get a symbol of the death of Christ put before God's eyes whenever a child of fallen Adam is presented to, or brought into external relationship with Him. In the circumcision of the Lord, it was, of course, a symbol of what He had undertaken to do for others, according to what He said in "the glory which He had with the Father before the world was," "Lo, I come to do Thy will." He was never at any time subject to death. He was capable of it, but not liable to it.

After the Cross, however, the symbol is changed from cutting and putting a mark on the flesh (man being then under trial), to baptism or burial, the end of all trial having now come before God in the wicked murder of His own Son.

* It is scarcely needful to note that nothing but the Cross could "put off the body of the flesh"—"put off the old man."

The first symbol—circumcision—looked forward ; the second symbol—baptism—looked back ; they both met at the Cross (see Col. ii. 11, 12) : and they are each connected with two important truths—truths which exalt Christ, and put the first man in his proper place, *i.e.*, completely out of sight ; but this is just what man cannot bear, and hence so many divisions and opinions upon the truths of God. Just to explain what I mean, let me say that a very common expression, and one which I have often heard, even from true Christians, when some truth has been presented, is, “What shall I get by this ?” or, “What can my child get by that ?” Ah ! does not such language expose the wretched villainy of the human heart ? Does it not put the creature before the Creator ? Does it not put “I” before Christ ? The language of the Spirit of God acting on a loyal heart to Jesus, asks intuitively, What will my Lord get by this ? not What shall I get by it ? And that soul will never lose by giving the first place to Christ and taking the lowest one himself ; for God will never be under an obligation to a saint of His ; and such are the Divine ways, that He always gains when He gives.

Ere we proceed, let us see how Scripture gives glory to the Son of God in reference to the afore-named symbols. They are each, as we said, connected with two most important truths. Circumcision was connected with two things ; first, a mark put upon the flesh of man, who was still under probation, when man, in the Jew, was under God’s law and God’s culture. Secondly, it was connected with a partial revelation of the Godhead under the name of Jehovah. The character of the dispensation was expressed in His own words, namely, “I dwell in thick darkness.”

Baptism is also connected with two things, but contrasted with the two former. First, instead of a mark put upon the flesh, as when man was under probation, it signifies burial, or a declaration that the first man is incapable of being improved, and therefore is put out of

sight altogether. Secondly, instead of a partial revelation of the Godhead, it is connected by the Lord Himself with "the *name* of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," God having been fully revealed, and no longer "dwelling in thick darkness." Darkness now would be absence of the knowledge of God; therefore, one must either walk in the light, as God is in the light, or have nothing to do with God.

There are divine principles in these magnificent moral contrasts, which are most important as a key to the unfolding of many portions of Scripture, and which expand the intelligence, deepen the affections for Christ, and put man in his place, and God in His.

Let us now return to the argument. Peter, in his first sermon, INCLUDES "CHILDREN" IN THIS LATTER SYMBOL OF CHRIST'S DEATH, even as they had always been included in the former one. When speaking to thousands of Jews, he says, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, for the remission of sins . . . for the promise is unto you and to your *children*.* Here are thousands of Jews, who know well the meaning of baptism, receiving the truth at the mouth of Peter. They give up Judaism, baptism being the ostensible exit from it into a place upon earth (not in heaven, mind), where the Lordship of Jesus is owned in the face of the world's enmity, and this, too, after they had crucified Him. They now put the Red Sea aspect of baptism (*i.e.*, a passing from one place into another, which expresses an external position, not an internal condition) between them and the world, including Judaism, of course. The Jordan teaching of baptism—a further truth—they have yet to learn. The sixth of Romans gives this instruction to those who had *already* been

* In Acts viii. 12 "women" (who never had their true place until the revelation of Christianity) are included; but to mention children there would have been superfluous. They had always been included in the symbols of Christ's death. In verse 13, Simon Magus is brought into a unity which regards professed Christianity on earth, but not into the essential vital unity of the Body, but into professed subjection to Christ.

baptised (Rom. vi. 3), not as a qualification to be baptised, as is erroneously taught, and unscriptural on the face of it.

Now, can you not hear those Jews say a second time, as it were, in reply to the enemy's effort to keep their children in Egypt, "Not a hoof shall be left behind?" Would they not blush red-hot at the heartless argument of some saints in our day who own it was quite right for those under law to make so much of the symbol of Christ's death for their children, but who say, "It is a different thing now, seeing that we are under grace"—as if being under grace warrants us to make less of the symbol of Christ's death for our children than those who were under the law did for their children?

We will now turn to a few Scriptures in reference to households, where we shall see that the households of saints were taken into account by God, before law, under law, and during grace. "And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy *house* (*oikos*) into the ark: for *thee* have I seen righteous before me in this generation." (Gen. vii. 1.) In the case of Abraham, God says, "I know him that he will command his children and his *household* (*oikos*) after him." (Gen. xviii. 19.) In recording the names of the children of Israel who came to find sustenance under the shelter of Joseph, who was raised up "to save life" (type of Christ risen), God says, "Every man and his *household** (*ekastos panoikee*, each one, if I may use the word, householdly) came with Joseph." (Exodus i. 1.) And in the case of redemption by blood we read, "They shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the *house* (*oikos*) of their fathers." (Exodus xii. 3.)† These are instances previous to law.

Under law we read of Aaron, ". . . And have made

* This word will come before us again in Acts xvi. 34.

† If you continue to read this Scripture, you will find the word *oikia* used twice when it is a question of eating (or communion), but when it is a question of protection, *oikos* is invariably the word. There is a very interesting analogy between the change of these words here, and a change of the same words in 1 Cor. i. 16, and xvi. 15.

an atonement for himself and for his *household* (*oikos*) and for all the congregation." (Lev. xvi. 17.) And this is the more remarkable because it is connected with propitiation, *not* with substitution, both of which are clearly and distinctly defined in this chapter. In the latter, it is taught that sins are positively put away. In the former, *sins* are not mentioned at all, but God's character and majesty are maintained, and all His rights in justice retrieved. And, as Romans iii. 22 expresses it, "Even the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all" (here we get what answers to propitiation), "and upon all them that believe" (here we get what answers to substitution). And again, in 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, ". . . If one died for all, then were all dead. And He died for all" (here we get what answers to propitiation), "that they which live," &c. (here we get what answers to substitution).†

Under grace we read of Lydia, in Acts xvi., "When she was baptised and her household" (*oikos*, same word); and of the jailor, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (*oikos*, same word still); "and they spake unto him and to all that were in his house" (*oikia*). This last is a different word from any we have yet quoted. The former, *oikos*, may be of a wider signification. By the Attic law, *oikos* included all

† This has been questioned by some who limit the "all" for whom Christ died, to true believers. The absurdity of such an interpretation may be seen by carrying it out to its just result, viz.: "He died for all" (true believers), "that they which live" (out of those true believers) "should not henceforth live unto themselves but," &c. So that, according to this interpretation, there must be some true believers who do not live at all.

By rightly dividing the word of truth, in reference to the distinction between propitiation and substitution—*i.e.*, seeing the full scope of the former towards "all," and the exclusive application of the latter towards "them which live," we get delivered from these grooves, and ruts, and notions, and this medley of confusion, which forgets that the Bible not only reveals a code of principles, but is a concrete book—a magnificently wondrous completeness—one Divine system. Allow a notion about one point in this Divine system, and you get into error in connection with many. You will find, as you look through God's eyes instead of your own, that the "Calvinistic-baptist" theory arises from limiting this or other parallel Scriptures, and then working up a system of its own to repair damages, which is shivered to atoms when brought into the witness-box for cross-examination by the Word of God.

that a man possessed, but *oikia* had a limited signification. Observe, also, that reference to his house came from the Divine side, when the jailor was thinking only of himself.

In 1 Cor. i. 16, we read, "And I baptised also the household (*oikos*) of Stephanas." Here we get the same word still, and not the word *oikia*, which we find in chapter xvi. 15, of this Epistle.

We are thus taught from Scripture that wherever the word household (*oikos*) is mentioned, God is taking into account the houses of His people. I do not believe, however, that the hired servants of our day bear any analogy to former times, when certain instructions were given in reference to "servants bought with money," or slaves.

I beg to call attention to Scripture, with regard to the house of the jailor, in Acts xvi. 34, that the word "rejoiced" (*eegalliasato*) is in the singular number, and excludes all but himself, and that in the words "believing in God" (*pepistukose tō Theo*), the verb is also in the singular number, excluding all but himself. The phrase, "with all his house," is only one word in the original, and an adverb (*panoikee*).^{*} Now, we know that an adverb may qualify a verb, either singular or plural, but as the verbs referred to are both in the singular number, the usual argument of some beloved Baptist brethren as to this Scripture is completely overthrown by the Scripture itself.

We thus find that the concurrent testimony of Scripture upon this subject is not only that God never separates households from their responsible heads, but in consonance with his moral ways, which never alter in any dispensation; and, having provided for us (but first of all for the maintenance of His own character), a symbol of the death of His own Son, He expects parents

^{*} *Panoikee* (householdly) would express his act in ostensibly bringing his own to the place in which he then stood in this world, under the authority of Christ, rather than their act in accepting the privilege.

to own this privilege conceded—no law imposed now, as once it was†—of presenting their children before Him in the symbol of Christ's death, by which alone God can sanction even an external or positional relationship with any child of fallen Adam. Scripture again and again marks the distinction between external position and internal condition, only let it be borne in mind that every saint of God occupies both these places, although a false professor may occupy the former. In Ephesians iv., 4th, 5th and 6th verses, we have three circles, the second, as described in the fifth verse, extending into a wider sphere than the first, which is marked in the fourth verse, and the third circle, defined in the sixth verse, taking in a still larger space beyond the second. The sixth verse which presents the largest circle, comprises everything that God created. It takes in all nature; not even a blade of grass or the leaf of a tree is outside of this domain. There is some analogy between its dominion and that referred to in Acts xvii. 24, 28, only that the words "in you all" (Eph. iv. 6) return to the centre of the innermost circle. In the fifth verse, or second circle—"One Lord, one faith, one baptism"—we have only that which recognises the Lordship of Christ, the faith once delivered to the saints (or, as it is expressed in Romans i. 4, "for obedience to *the faith*"), and baptism, the symbol of His death, which puts one ostensibly under His authority. Here we get that only which comes from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost—"one Spirit"—by whom the body of Christ is formed.

So also in reference to Christ, as it is written, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" But if we go beyond the circumference of this circle into the domain of the fifth verse, or second circle, we get profession, which may be real or otherwise. Of course, profession is a good thing if genuine, but even then it awakens another thought

† Hence no legal command to anyone. It is a privilege as expressed by Scripture—"See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised?" and, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptised?"

than that of union. My new-born babe, when given me, is in the outermost circle—that of nature. When I bring it by baptism within the precincts of the second circle, where Christ's authority is owned, its external position in this world becomes changed.* But it is God's prerogative, and His only, to bring any into the first or innermost circle described in the fourth verse, which expresses not only external relationship, but internal condition. It has, however, been said, How can a person be responsible for conduct consistent with a relationship such as being in the House of God or the second circle claims, seeing that when he was a child he had nothing whatever to do with bringing himself into it? Let me ask if a child has had anything whatever to do with bringing itself into the third circle, or that of nature? And yet he has privileges which beasts do not enjoy, although in the same place, and responsibilities too, which they are not under. If God in His grace uses the faith and the heart of a parent to count upon Him to bring his child within the innermost circle also, seeing that God has written, in order to produce faith in Himself, “. . . thou shalt be saved, and thy house,” and instructed parents to “bring up” (or nourish) “their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”? (Eph. vi. 4.) This word, “bring up,” is used only in one other place in the New Testament (Eph. v. 29), and there it is translated “nourish”—“but nourisheth and cherisheth it even as the Lord the Church.” It is very precious, is it not? What goodness comes out of His heart, and what encouragement it puts into ours! Such is the Divine language, for He never sends parents on their own charges—no, not even for the children He tells them to nurse for Himself.

* Observe that it never can by any possibility exclude itself from this circle so as to be ONLY within the precincts of the third circle again. Hence the unscriptural absurdity of re-baptising—there is but “one baptism.” Added to this, it denies previous responsibility and privilege; in truth, it sets aside Divine authority and human responsibility.

But there is a theory which insists, as a necessity, that internal condition, such as salvation and remission of sins; should always precede external position.† Some have assumed this as Scriptural, although it is but a mere conclusion of the human mind; and they then draw another human conclusion from this already erroneous one, and think it wrong to put their children in the symbol of Christ's death under God's eye, because the little babes are so helpless that they have not capacity even to believe. Now, apart from children altogether, by way of not mixing two things together, let us submit the first of these conclusions to the test of Scripture, for if we hold anything that Scripture can detect a flaw in, you may be sure such a theory never came from God. The theory is that forgiveness of sins and salvation must necessarily precede baptism. But this is completely overthrown by the following Scriptures. In Mark xvi. 16, the words "shall be saved" come after baptism; in Acts ii. 38, the words "remission of sins" come after baptism; and in Acts xxii. 16, we get, "arise and be baptised and"—not because your sins have been already washed away, but—"wash away thy sins." Here "wash away thy sins" comes after "be baptised," as stated in God's Word. There is one instance, and one only, in Scripture, where the Holy Ghost is given previous to baptism, and this is done to show that God is determined to bring in the Gentiles in spite of the Jews, as the ninth and tenth chapters of Acts clearly show. The usual order is reversed (Acts x. 47), and this is done for a special purpose. I remember once saying to a dear brother, "Could you put yourself into such a position as to be able to say to a person,

† With reference, however, to grown-up people, suppose a pagan were to say after having heard the Gospel, "I throw away all my idols, and bow to the Lord Jesus the Son of God: will you baptise me in His blessed Name"? I reply, "Gladly." His acceptance of so much would be my warrant for doing so. But in the case of a helpless babe of believing parents, who have faith to put it ostensibly under Christ, the Divine statement, "... else were your children unclean, but now they are holy," together with the concurrent testimony of Scripture, which we have been considering, would be my warrant.

‘Arise and be baptised, and wash away thy sins?’” He honestly replied, “I could not.” “Very well,” I reply, “there must be some difference between your thoughts on this subject, and God’s revealed ones about it for this dispensation.”

We have the same Divine order in 1 Peter iii. 20, 21, “. . . Eight souls were saved by [or through] water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us.” And as Scripture affirms that baptism typifies Christ’s death, and is figured by the waters of the deluge, faith passes its children through Christ’s death in symbol, as the only way of being saved from the judgment coming upon the world, agreeably with the Scriptures we have been considering. Then, in reference to the divine order, we know that Noah’s household did not pass through water because they had been already saved, but in order *to be saved* from the judgment then coming upon the world; and so also as to water in baptism. God says, “*the like figure.*” These are His own words. Could language be plainer? And He adds, in a parenthesis, “Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the demand (*epivroteema*) of a good conscience toward God.” Therefore, according to this Scripture also, one is baptised, not because of having been already saved, and to nothing less than that which answers to the demand of a good (or honest) conscience—in truth, to that which answers to the sinner’s need, which the whole work of the Cross, including “the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” could alone supply. Now, all true-hearted parents will admit that they ought to deny the world for their children as completely as they do for themselves. But as this is no light thing, and it has to be done in the strength of Another, the conscience must be exercised, and faith in God’s goodness produced by the provision He has made in the Word of His grace, the Cross being its deepest expression. And surely every saint ought to love subjection to the concurrent testimony of all Scripture to God’s thoughts about the

use of these wondrous symbols of death—the death of His own Beloved Son. The more such poor things as we are make of the Cross for ourselves and for our children, the more we ascribe glory to the Lord, and the better for us and for our children also.

And now let me add, that we need to exercise the same kind of patience with each other as the Lord has done with us, especially in such a day, when the most beautiful thing that God ever set up has been smashed by the enemy. It is written, “If any man desire to do His will he shall know;” and again, “If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.” I apprehend this to mean—if there be a want of capacity, wait patiently, and He will reveal it all to you in His own blessed way and time. But we have need to be tender and gentle one towards another, and to express the grace of Christ, which is of the nature of God, and which is far more excellent than any capacity to receive the communication of truths. He has left us here to love one another, taking no less a measure than His love to us. And the only thing worth staying for is to see sinners brought to God, and His dear saints walking in love and harmony, helping each other in the truth.—Acts xvii. 11.