

Newsletter # 1, Wed Mar. 17, 04

Greetings in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ,

INTRODUCTION: I am Jim Burks, Pastor of Trinity Missionary Baptist Church, Citrus Heights, Ca.

I intend to send a letter on a weekly basis dealing with doctrine. I'm not that old (62) but I have been around some very colorful and dedicated men who taught me a lot. I'd like to share some. I love to write about the Word and, even if I may miss a point or two, I believe there is no better study than the Bible.

PURPOSE: Promoting fellowship through understanding

SHORT BACKGROUND: Saved at Alisal Baptist Church, Salinas (1959) Ted Cooper, Pastor. After three years in the Army, Pastors were Luther Cooper, Jack Dennis and Art Harris.

Ordained deacon at Salinas in 1970 at Landmark, MBC, Pastor, Art Harris. Called to preach three months later and ordained that year by same church. Organized Faith Landmark MBC of Santa Rita, Ca. in 1970. Resigned in 1975 to do mission work in Grand Junction, Colo.

Organized New Covenant MBC in 1976, Grand Junction, Colo. Called to Pastor Emanuel MBC, Orangevale, Ca 1980. Due to doctrinal reasons resigned and organized Trinity MBC in 1981, where I still pastor. Our church is part of the Old State Association. Lavon and I have been married 41 years and have four children and fourteen grandchildren. Our young peoples choir sounds great! Anyone may contact me at Jimthatlido@aol.com.

Let's study this week, baptism.

THE PICTURE OF BAPTISM: A picture is worth a thousand words. A pictorial ordinance then, ought to be worth a bunch of Biblical passages. And so, a saved person when baptized doesn't have to know any Bible passages. But, the Lord gave us this pictorial ordinance to clearly show what happened when a person was saved. After all, a pictorial ordinance represents what has taken place beforehand.

FIRST EXPLANATION: A death. Romans 6 says baptism is a burial, "...we have been buried with Him through baptism into death," V 4. Since we do not bury a person to kill him, a death has already occurred. And this is necessarily so, or we have a skewed picture of what a burial means. Baptism is not, as so many would like it, the means of a spiritual salvation. Rather, Scripture teaches, "For you have died," Colossians 3:3. The KJV says YOU ARE DEAD. The Greek tense is Aorist, making an assertion of fact at a specific point in time. The time of a believer's death is AT THE CROSS. "And in Him you were circumcised with a circumcision MADE WITHOUT HANDS, in the removal of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ," Col 2:11. By faith, His death becomes our death by God's declarative will.

With Christ, the meaning of circumcision is extended. God is no longer concerned with a circumcision that produces a pure lineage within a covenant people. It is more than genetic. Circumcision is now of the heart, Ro 2:29. It is ascribed by faith and is of the Spirit, not a Rabbi's knife. Its cutting away includes much more than a foreskin of the males. In Christ, the New Covenant meaning of cutting away is the entire body, a crucifixion. Circumcision in the O. T. did not produce an acceptable result. However, it did produce Jesus. His circumcision was exactly what God intended. "For it was the Father's good pleasure...and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross," Col 1:19-20. Indeed! "He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body, through death, Col 1:22. His death

initiated the eternal covenant and His blood transfers believers into Him and His life-giving covenant. If you are looking for a covenant, you'll see it in the circumcision made without hands that removed the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Thus, He is our surety of the covenant, Heb 7:22, not us, not our faith. Blood must ratify all covenants and the New Covenant was ratified by the life-blood of Jesus.

In Jesus purity has arrived, ending lineage. "Unto us a Son is born," Isa 9:6, bringing "grace and truth," John 1:17, "that we might live through Him," I Jn 4:9. He is the Son of man and the Second Adam who removed the Old, nailing it to His cross. His shed blood washed away sin. At the same time, His blood ratified the New Covenant. God's concern now is with purity that exists only in the righteousness of Christ, which is a gift at faith, Ro 5:16-20. Righteousness is to be understood for all tenses of salvation, past, present and future, but its beginning is at the cross. Before purity or righteousness is granted, the body of sin must be removed; which occurs when a believer is circumcised, without hands, with Christ. And this eternal transaction takes place at the point of first faith. "But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe," Galatians 3:22. At the cross, man's spirit is released from bondage (flesh), corresponding to the O. T. picture of the Passover Angel. He doesn't stop where the blood is applied. Thus, life can leave bondage. After circumcision, God's concern moves from the cross to the resurrected new man. The Father wants the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness to reign in our life by His Son, Jesus Christ, Romans 5:17. Hence, baptism has more meaning than burying the dead. Its picture continues, revealing a raising up of the believer in order to walk with Jesus.

SECOND EXPLANATION: "having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead," Col 2:12. Here, the picture shows the other side of death, which is life. It focuses upon the raising from the dead. By reading Col. 2:11 & 12 together, God's full salvation is coupled by baptism. We died (past tense) and are raised (present tense). "Even so we also should walk in newness of life," Ro 6:4. Our glorious future therefore, is built upon the past and present righteousness of Jesus Christ. Baptism clearly pictures that a death and resurrection happened, not of the believer, but by the only one who accomplished both, Jesus Christ. He was God's physical offering for our spiritual need. He is the Word that became flesh, accomplishing God's will. Our faith in His finished work allows God's declarative will to take action in us by the Spirit. When we trust the physical accomplishments of God's Son, our spiritual condition changes from death to life.

Baptism pictures that a death took place. With the old buried, the new life is to rise in the body of Christ, His church, where faith is exercised. "Baptized into Christ," Gal 3:27, means a living incorporation with Christ in order to follow His leadership. This is vital for discernment. A saved person cannot walk for the Lord without Scriptural baptism. Is it any wonder why this ordinance was given into the hands of the church, His body? Landmark Baptists teach four points to proper baptism. 1) Candidate, a person who is saved; 2) Mode, immersion; 3) Administrator, Church authority; 4) Purpose, to serve in a church body which Christ is Head. "Unto Him be glory in the church," Ephesians 3:21.
