

Morning Sermon Outline December 14, 2014
“Christmas Blessings & Covenant Baptism”
Genesis 12:1-3; Acts 2:36-29; 2 Corinthians 1:20

If you were to read the Bible, cover to cover, regularly, year after year, studying it carefully – you would start seeing certain recurring themes. One of the greatest of those themes you would see was God’s desire to bless His people.

He blesses Adam and Eve when He first creates them, He blesses Noah as He saves Him from the flood, and in Genesis 12, He blesses Abram, and promises to bless those who bless Abram and curse those curse Abram and he ultimately says that ---

And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:3 NKJ)

If you kept reading about this BLESSED THEME, you’d realize it continued to Psalm 1, and is continued further in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, and continued all the way through the Book of Revelation –⁹ Then he said to me, "Write: `Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." (Revelation 19:9 NKJ)

When God speaks to Abram in Genesis 12:1-3, He speaks of blessings that would ultimately flow to “all the families of the earth.” These blessings did not flow THAT FAR in Abram’s earthly lifetime. No, they would not start really flowing until Christ came. It is “in Christ” that all the promises of God are fulfilled, even those early promises of blessing made to Abram.

For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. (2 Corinthians 1:20 NKJ)

Which if you see it right entwines the theme of God’s desire to BLESS, with the themes of God’s Covenant and promises. That God KEEPS HIS PROMISES – God promises to bless those who bless Abram, is another THEME that runs through Scripture, like a GREAT GOLDEN THREAD! The theme of promises and Covenants, also runs through Scripture and also finds its focus on and its fulfillment IN Christ -

¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ. (Galatians 3:16 NKJ)

Baptism is misunderstood by much of today’s church. People see it as merely as the next thing a person does after making a profession of faith. People do not see it in connection to God’s desire to bless and in connection to His covenant promises.

What is Baptism a sign of?

I. *It is a sign of God’s Covenant, of His promises to bless, which corresponds to the Old Testament Sign of Circumcision –*

1. *God “cut” a covenant with Abram –*
the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." (Genesis 15:1 NKJ)

⁸ And he said, "Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?" ⁹ So He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." ¹⁰ Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. ¹¹ And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. ¹² Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him.

¹⁷ And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.

¹⁸ On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, (Genesis 15:8-18 NKJ)

2. *Circumcision was the sign of this Covenant –*

¹⁰ "This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised;

¹¹ "and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. (Genesis 17:10-11 NKJ)

A. *It was a bloody sign –*

²⁵ Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet, and said, "Surely you are a husband of blood to me!"

²⁶ So He let him go. Then she said, "You are a husband of blood!"-- because of the circumcision. (Exodus 4:25-26 NKJ)

B. *It was a bloody sign, performed upon Abaham's and His seeds' reproductive organs, because Abraham's Seed – Christ – would bleed and die for their sin!*

3. *Baptism is a Sign which also points to the death of Jesus Christ –⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4 NKJ)*

There is a similar correspondence with Covenant meals: Passover, a Lamb must die, bloody. The Lord's Supper, Christ has already died as the Lamb of God, therefore there is not more need for a bloody sign, just a remembrance in bread and wine.

II. A sign of a moving to the realm of God's covenant blessings -

^{NKJ} **Genesis 12:1** Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. ² I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:1-3 NKJ)

1. *"Get out of your country" We are called by God away from where we were –*

² **And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods. ³ Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River, led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. (Joshua 24:2-3 NKJ)**

They were on the other side of the River; where they served "other gods." It was not just a locational move; it was a spiritual move.

A. *We are called out of the darkness to the Light of Christ –¹³ He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, (Colossians 1:13 NKJ)*

B. *Jesus is the LIGHT we are called to –*

^{NKJ} **Isaiah 9:1** Nevertheless the gloom *will not be* upon her who *is* distressed, As when at first He lightly esteemed The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, And afterward more heavily oppressed *her*, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, In Galilee of the Gentiles. ² The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined. (Isaiah 9:1-2 NKJ)

¹² Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." (John 8:12 NKJ)

³⁶ "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." ³⁷ Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?" ³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

³⁹ "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:36-39 NKJ)

2. *We are called "away from" being those who "crucified" :36 Christ:*

A. *To repentance - :38*

B. *To an "everyone of you be baptized" recognition of a need, for a "remission of sin." - :38*

C. *To a belief that "the promise is to your children" - :39*

3. *We baptize even our children because of God's promises to them, they are part of the Covenant Community; meaning what?*

A. *We are to bring them up "in the training and admonition of the LORD"–*

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: ³ "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." ⁴ And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:1-4 NKJ)

Now does Paul admonish us only to train up the children who are above 13 years old, or only those who clearly understand? No!

B. *Baptism is an entry level sign! Baptism is a family sign!*

¹⁵ **"And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that**

were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15 NKJ)

¹⁴ Now a certain woman named Lydia heard *us*. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. ¹⁵ And when she and her household were baptized, she begged *us*, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded *us*. (Acts 16:14-15 NKJ) *What happened in the case of Lydia? One person made a profession of faith, the entire household was baptized. What happened in the case of the Philippian Jailor, one man believed, his entire family was baptized –*

³⁰ And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their stripes*. And immediately he and all his *family* were baptized. (Acts 16:30-33 NKJ)

Note, throughout the Book of Acts, not one person with a family is baptized without their entire family being baptized with them.

Today preachers preach "PERSONAL" salvation. There is truth in the idea of personal salvation. Yet, the terminology "personal salvation" is NOT BIBLICAL. Our salvation if REAL will impact and influence those closest to us –

¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. (1Corinthians 7:14 NKJ)

⁶ Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6 NKJ)

III. *It is a sign of a commitment to a vital relationship with God –*

^{NKJ} Genesis 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I *am* Almighty God; **walk before Me and be blameless.** ² "And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." ³ Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: ⁴ "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. ⁵ "No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name

shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶ "I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. ⁸ "Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." ⁹ And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ "This *is* My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: **Every male child among you shall be circumcised;** ¹¹ "and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. (Genesis 17:1-11 NKJ)

1. *A relationship with God involves Keeping His Commandments / walking before Him blameless – Genesis 17:1*

¹⁵ "If you love Me, keep My commandments. (John 14:15 NKJ)

2. *A relationship with God means humility on our part, Abram fell on his face - :3 ... Baptism implies we are sinners –*

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Act 2:38 NKJ)

This is a common error with baptism; people think it saves or that IT (Baptism) washes away sin. Baptism does not wash away sin and it does not save, it is a mere SYMBOL pointing us to the way of salvation, which is through Christ and by the power of His Holy Spirit –

⁴ But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵ not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4-7 NKJ)

IV. *Errors to avoid in regard to baptism –*

(1) *Credo vs. Paedo or so called "believers" vs "baby" baptism ... Why avoid such language?*

1st – Because we as Presbyterians do not baptize unbelievers, at least not any more than these called “believer’s Baptists” do – Occasionally, because I am Presbyterian I will run into a zealous Baptist who will immediately start accusing me of baptizing UNBELIVERS, He will say, you baptize GOATS!

1. Scripture militates against this idea –

^{NKJ} Matthew 18:1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” ² Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, ³ and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ “Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ “Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. ⁶ “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matthew 18:1-6 NKJ)

A. A little child :2 and :3 “little children” are our examples, we are to be humble and “believing” :6 like they are.

B. In these verses Jesus says “little children” “little ones” believe in Him :6 Not one verse in all the Bible calls little children “unbelievers” or “goats.”

C. It is true little children have a sin nature –

³ The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. (Psalm 58:3 NKJ)

D. Yet, we ALL have a sin nature, it is not something we grow out of –

¹⁰ As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. (Romans 3:10-11 NKJ)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23 NKJ)

We do not grow out of a sin nature by reaching a certain age, we are GRACED out of a sin nature, by God’s great grace –

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10 NKJ)

2. Scripture commands we baptize our children –

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and **let every one of you be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ **“For the promise is to you and to your children**

Matthew 25:32-46 is not at all about baptized babies -

(2) Avoid the unscriptural idea of an age of accountability; basically God cannot save a person until they are at least 12 or 13 years old –

3. Scripture also militates against this idea –

¹³ But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. ¹⁴ “And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. ¹⁵ “For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. (Luke 1:13-15 NKJ)

³⁹ Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, ⁴⁰ and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ “But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ “For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. (Luke 1:39-44 NKJ)

O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth, Who have set Your glory above the heavens! ² Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength, Because of Your enemies, That You may silence the enemy and the avenger. (Psalm 8:1-2 NKJ)

A. True salvation does not come from fleshly maturity but by the power of God

B. Therefore, children can be saved, filled with the Spirit, even from the womb.

C. Therefore, again, teach them young, take them to church, pray for them and believe they can be saved, even at the youngest age.

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