

January 10, 2010

Baptism of Jesus- Commitment in Christian Life

(Is 49:1-6, I Pet 3:13—22, Math 3:3-17)

Once James and John along with their mother requested Jesus to grant them to sit on both his sides in His kingdom. Jesus asked them if they could take the baptism which he was going to take. What Jesus meant here was his death and resurrection(Mark 10:35-39). Not knowing what they were saying they said that they could. However we know that they endured many sufferings later for the sake of Christ. Baptism is one of the two sacraments. Lord's table is the other one. These are the two commandments that the Lord has given us. In the time of Jesus the Jews gave baptism to the gentile proselytes. John gave baptism of the remission of sins in obedience to the command of God. In today's Gospel lesson Jesus also took baptism by John. Jesus was sinless, why then did he take baptism? For two reasons,

- i) To identify himself with the whole humanity
- ii) To commit himself to the task of completing the work given by the Father(in today's Old Testament lesson). In other words Jesus was getting ready to begin his work.

Therefore taking baptism means committing our lives to finish the work that God has given us, no matter how much suffering we may encounter. We need to proclaim the Gospel like Noah. This is today's epistle lesson. We should never take or give baptism just for the sake of marriage or to fulfill some Christian ritual. We need to consecrate ourselves to do what God has entrusted us by giving the gift of His life. **Commitment in Christian life means not to live for ourselves but to live for Christ who has died for us and rose again (2 Cor 5:15). Baptism is public witness to this fact in our lives.**

The Gospel lesson : Mathew 3:3-17 Jesus identified with us by Baptism

In between the period from going to the temple in Jerusalem as a 12 year Old boy to the time of His Baptism, we don't have any record about what Jesus did. But from the words of the Father we know that

He lived a life that was pleasing God. Jesus did not sin .But why then should he take baptism? The answer is Jesus took baptism to fulfill all righteousness and law. The second reason is he took the sin of all the humanity on Him so as to take the punishment and death on him on their behalf. Therefore His baptism points out to His death on the cross on their behalf. In this way He also authenticated John's ministry. Immediately after baptism He was anointed by the Holy Spirit from the Father as a seal of His approval. **In other words Jesus offered Himself to God as an appointed messiah to fulfill the three fold work of giving God's word to His people as a prophet, offering his life as ransom for all as a High priest and establishing God's kingdom as a King.** Jesus knew what His work was on the earth and so he dedicated himself to it by Baptism. In the same way we also should know why we take Baptism. Only after repenting for our sins we should take baptism. But many take Baptism like the Pharisees and Sadducees with out a genuine repentance for their sins. Then God would call us by what He called them , "off spring of the serpent". Therefore we should know why we should take baptism in order to teach our children.

The day we accept Jesus as our personal savior we will become a part of the body of Christ, the church by means of the baptism of the Spirit. Just as Jesus identified Himself with the humanity by Baptism we also identify ourselves with Him in his death ,burial and resurrection by our baptism. We have to commit ourselves to do what God wants us to do like Jesus .To day's Old Testament lesson tells us the work which Jesus had inaugurated and handed over to us.

**The Old Testament lesson :Isaiah 49;1-6
We have to be united with Jesus by our Baptism**

We have what we call four servant songs in the book of Isaiah(42:1-4,49:1-6, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12).To day's portion is the second of them. All the Bible pundits believe that all these are fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ. God the Father appointed his son as His servant to give to the sin darkened world the light of life. Jesus started to do this work from the day He was baptized and glorified God by finishing the work(John 17:2).In His plan of salvation all the people besides the people of Israel are there. Even though people of Israel haven't accepted Him yet ,one day they are going to be saved .Many Bible teachers believe that the servant in this portion represents the people of Israel, the Prophet ,Lord Jesus Christ and the Church(the New Israel). Theses also apply to every believer who is united to the body Jesus Christ ,which is the church by baptism. As servant of

Jehovah the people of Israel miserably failed to do the work appointed to them by God. In this way they broke the covenant with God. Therefore the Lord scattered them to the four corners of the earth. But the God of all grace promised through the prophet to gather all of them and again make them His people as church the New Israel. This promise began to be fulfilled through Jesus Christ. The body he took to fulfill this was the body No. One. On the day of Pentecost the body he took was body No. two, the church to complete it. We are the parts of this body by our baptism. Therefore we too have to be the light of the world now just as He was the light when he was on the earth. He has chosen us to bring glory to His glorious grace(Ep 1:6). He has appointed us to be His witnesses unto the ends of the world whatever trials and suffering we may face. This is today's epistle lesson.

Epistle lesson: 1 Pet 3:15-22
We have to be witnesses unto the ends of the world.

It is one of the difficult portions in the New Testament to interpret. But the way Peter encouraged the believers of the time will also encourage us. To finish the work His Father gave Him, Jesus had to die. In this way He reconciled the world to God. When they hurled their insults at him, Jesus did not retaliate; when he suffered, Jesus made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly(1Pet 2:20-23). That's what is commitment. When Peter wrote this letter the believers at that time were going through severe persecution. Yet Peter reminded them their responsibility. To day Peter is also doing the same to us.

The God who is never pleased at the death of any one (Ez 18:23,32) always warned people of all times. When Noah built the ark for 120 years He was preaching the Gospel warning people about the impending danger. The world of Noah is no different from us. Noah could only save his family. Judging by the results, Noah is failure. But God commended him. When Peter told about this to the believers it encouraged them a lot. In addition Peter is reminding them about what they have committed to do at the time of their baptism. He also told them to be always ready to give answer to those who question about the hope they had with clear conscience(1 Pet 3:16). Here Peter also reminding us that Baptism won't save us.

Therefore to day what God is reminding us through the scripture lessons is that just as Jesus consecrated to fulfill the task given by God from the day of baptism we too must consecrate ourselves to

finish the work that God has given us. May God help us to do that.
Amen .

Life application :

1. Usually every Church conduct classes for people before Baptism.
Why do we not conduct post baptism classes to teach some basics of faith ,like the purpose of life and his salvation for us.
2. Do you know the work that God has given you?