

Incarnate Word Tract Series #7 Holy Baptism

I Acknowledge One Baptism

“Of Baptism they (the Lutheran Church) teach that it is necessary to salvation and that through Baptism the grace of God is offered . . .” This quotation from Article IX of the Augsburg Confession indicates the high value the Lutheran Church places upon Holy Baptism and it also tells us why Baptism is so important. It is necessary to salvation and it imparts God’s saving grace to us.

In the mind of the Scriptures and of the Church, to be baptized is the most important thing that can happen to a man. God does so many and such great things to us and for us in Holy Baptism. Our Baptism is our greatest treasure. It is the purpose of this tract to bring before our eyes the great gifts God has given to us in Baptism, that our hearts be moved to confidence in God’s grace and mercy and to thankfulness for the Gifts of His divine love. The Scriptures use many expressions to describe the benefits of Holy Baptism. We will examine three of these Biblical expressions.

1. Born Again

Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” A moment later He explained this by saying, “Except a man be **born of water and the Spirit**, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

This means that to receive Holy Baptism (“water and the Spirit”) is to be born again into the kingdom of God. In the life-giving waters of Holy Baptism we are reborn as the children of God. We who have received Baptism are twice-born. One birth by the instrumentality of our earthly father, the Second Birth by our heavenly Father. The first birth makes us sons of men, the Second Birth makes us adopted sons and daughters of God. We are reborn as God’s children. Now we share in His divine Life, and now we can see, and enter into the Kingdom of God.

2. Crucified, Buried, Risen with Christ

When St. Paul wants to describe what God did to us and for us in Holy Baptism, he does so in these words from Romans 6: “Know ye not, that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? We are **buried with Him** by Baptism into death . . . our old man is **crucified with Him**.” In the Sacrament of Baptism we are so closely united to the Lord Jesus that we actually share His death and crucifixion, in which the power of sins is destroyed. So united to Christ in Baptism are we, that we also share in His glorious Resurrection from the dead. “Buried with Him in Baptism, in which you are also **risen with Him**” (Col. 2:12).

By sharing with Christ in His death and Resurrection, we share also the blessed results of His death and Resurrection. We are now, through Baptism, dead of sin, and alive toward God (Romans 6:3-11).

3. Forgiveness of Sins and Salvation

In Baptism we received the Forgiveness of sins. That is why we confess at the Celebration of the Eucharist, “I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins.” On the first Pentecost day, St. Peter preached, saying, “Be baptized, every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). And, of course, “Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.” Therefore St. Peter can say, “Baptism doth also now save us” and the Augsburg Confession can say “Baptism is necessary to salvation.”

Your Baptism Continues to Work

Your Baptism took place a long time ago. It was quickly over and done. But it is still alive and at work in you. In his Large Catechism, Dr. Luther teaches us: “Therefore our Baptism remains forever; and even though some on should fall from it and sin, nevertheless we always may come back to it again.” You still receive forgiveness of sins, faith, the working of the Holy Spirit, and God’s grace through your one Baptism. Love your Baptism! Live your Baptism!