

A Follow Up Bible Study

Building on the Messages of the Lessons from The Epiphany of Our Lord

Warm Up

If you found yourself in scary predicament with no foreseeable way out, what would you turn to? What hymns, songs, and prayers would you pull from your memory to renew your hope as on eagles' wings?

1. Sermon for January 10, 2021

Text: Acts 16:25-34

Theme: Are you as wise as the jailer, Paul, and Silas?

Share your questions or comments regarding Sunday's sermon.

Share your questions or comments regarding Sunday's sermon **text**.

2. Look how Luke includes himself in these verses. Identify the hallmarks of his eyewitness.

¹¹ After we put out to sea from Troas, we sailed straight to Samothrace, and the next day to Neapolis.

¹² From there we went to Philippi, which is a leading city in that part of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We stayed in this city for a number of days.

¹³ On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate alongside the river, where we thought there was a place of prayer. We sat down and began to talk to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴ A woman named Lydia, who worshipped God, was listening. She was a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira. The Lord opened her heart to pay close attention to what Paul was saying. ¹⁵ When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

¹⁶ Once when we were going to the place of prayer, a slave girl met us. She had a spirit that foretold the future, and she made a large profit for her owners by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ As she followed Paul and us, she kept crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way to be saved." ¹⁸ When she kept doing this for many days, Paul became so annoyed that he turned to the spirit and said, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.

We aren't told, but why do you suspect Paul didn't free this slave girl from the demon right away?

What insights might we gain from our Lord Jesus why Paul wanted to silence the witness of this demon? After all the demon's message was true.

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3. Why do you think Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns to God?

4. Luke is clear why the jailer was about to take his life. Read this verse, then state why.

²⁷ When the jailer woke up and saw that the prison doors were opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, because he thought that the prisoners had escaped.

But why commit suicide over escaped prisoners? Here's an example when we usually look to outside source to explain the jailer's behavior. But is it always best to first see if the text offers any clues. What insight is offered in these verses?

²² When the crowd also joined in the attack against them, the magistrates tore off their clothes and ordered them to be beaten with rods. ²³ After they had beaten them severely, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to guard them securely. ²⁴ Because he received such a command, the jailer threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

It is reported that the Roman punishment for letting a prison escape was to receive the punishment waiting the prisoner. Based on this, many assume that someone in the prison was guilty of a capital offense. I've also read that the jailer's family was subject to the same punishment he received. Is that why Paul and Silas added the last phrase?

³¹ They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household."

5. Now the big question. Answer this from the text, not from your perceptions. Saved from what?

*³⁰ Then he brought them outside and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to **be saved**?"*

*³¹ ... "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will **be saved**, ...*

*¹⁷ "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way to **be saved**."*

6. This time I noticed a progression that I had not noticed before. Summarize their movements.

*³⁰ Then **he brought them outside** and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"*

*³² They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to everyone in his home. ³³ At the same hour of the night, **he took them and washed their wounds**. Without delay, he and all his family were baptized.*

*³⁴ **Then he brought Paul and Silas into his house** and set food before them. He rejoiced, because he and his whole household had come to believe in God.*

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7. What is meant by the phrase **believe in**? What do we learn about baptism in these verses?

*“Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.”³² They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to everyone in his home.³³ At the same hour of the night, he took them and washed their wounds. Without delay, **he and all his family were baptized.**³⁴ Then he brought Paul and Silas into his house and set food before them. He rejoiced, because he and his whole household had come to **believe in** God.*

First Lesson: Isaiah 49:1-6

The Second Servant Song

The LORD’s Servant Saves the Nations

49 Listen to me, you coastlands.
Pay attention, you faraway peoples!
The LORD called me from the womb.
When I was inside my mother, he mentioned
my name.
² He made my mouth like a sharpened sword.
He hid me in the shadow of his hand.
He made me a polished arrow.
He concealed me in his quiver.
³ He said to me, “You are my servant Israel,
in whom I will display my glory.”
⁴ But I said to myself, “I have labored in vain.
I spent my strength and came up empty, with
nothing.
Yet a just verdict for me rests with the LORD,
and my reward is with my God.”

⁵ But now the Lord,
who formed me from the womb to be his
servant,
to turn Jacob back to him,
so that Israel might be gathered to him,
so that I will be honored in the eyes of the
LORD,
because my God has been my strength—
⁶ the LORD said:
It is too small a thing that you should just be
my servant
to raise up only the tribes of Jacob
and to restore the ones I have preserved in
Israel,
so I will appoint you to be a light for the
nations,
so that my salvation will be known to the
end of the earth.

8. Hebrew parallelism echoes the previous verse with synonyms. Note the parallelism in v.1.
What is meant by *coastlands*?

The second half of v. 1 is the chief link to the Baptism of our Lord. Explain.

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9. Explain the parallelism of v. 2 and what it reveals about God's role for the Messiah.

10. The Mission of this Servants of the Lord is revealed in v. 5. What was his mission?

What other mission/purpose did God have for this Servants according to v. 3

In v. 3 the Servant of Yahweh is called *Israel*. How does v. 5 rule out that the Servant of Yahweh is the Jewish people?

It might seem confusing to give the Messiah the name of God's people. But what is Yahweh revealing by doing so?

Explain how v. 4 is a perfect description or definition of **faith**.

This Servant of Yahweh is far too awesome to limit his mission to the ones revealed in v. 5. What expanded mission is revealed in v. 6? Do you recognize these words? Who quotes them?

What words in v. 6 hint that not all Jews will be saved. Only a remnant will be gathered?

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Gospel Lesson: Mark 1:4-11

⁴ John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him. They were baptized by him in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins. ⁶ John was clothed in camel's hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He preached, "One more powerful than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals! ⁸ I baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love. I am well pleased with you."

13. We are so accustomed to using *baptizing* and *baptism* exclusively as religious terms we forget that they are simple Greek words for washing with water. Context reveals how these words are being used. Before examining the washing of this text, let's do a quick word study in this same book - Mark 7.

⁷ The Pharisees and some of the experts in the law came from Jerusalem and gathered around Jesus. ² They saw some of his disciples eating bread with unclean (that is, unwashed) hands. ³ In fact, the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they scrub their hands with a fist,^a holding to the tradition of the elders. ⁴ When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash.^b And there are many other traditions they adhere to, such as the washing^c of cups, pitchers, kettles, and dining couches.^d ⁵ The Pharisees and the experts in the law asked Jesus, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders? Instead they eat bread with unclean hands."

a. Or "up to the wrist." This refers to a method of ceremonial washing.

b. Greek baptizo (translated baptize in other contexts)

c. Greek baptisimos (translated baptism in other contexts)

d. A few witnesses to the text omit and dining couches.

In v. 3 the word (*nipsontai*) is translated as *scrub* in the EHV. Other translations use *wash*. From this text we see that both the Greek terms *baptize* and *baptism* simply mean *wash by applying water*. These Greek terms were used for the Jewish practice of *ceremonial cleansing* which did **not** require immersing in water. This is especially apparent with the dining couches. *Sprinkling with water* or *pouring water on* were a common forms of ceremonial cleansing.

Many devout Bible believing Christians insist that *baptism/baptize* require immersion. Where does that idea come from? Our text reads.

⁹ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens being torn open...

This could refer to *coming out of the water* after immersion. But it could also mean *coming out of the water and standing on the river bank*. Just like a mom calling to her children who are swimming in a pool, lake, river, or ocean, *Come out the water and get dried off. We're going home*. So this text doesn't limit baptize to immersion only. Mark 7 defines it as *apply water...*

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14. Let's study v. 4

⁴ John appeared, baptizing ...and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Baptism is the noun modified by the phrase *for the forgiveness of sins*. The Greek preposition *eis* with the accusative is a purpose clause. Baptized for the purpose of giving the remission of sins. Baptism is God's work. In baptism (water connected to God's Word) God washes away sin's guilt and he promises to keep watching away the guilt of the baptized. Of course he does this because the Messiah would fully pay for all sins with his blood and rise to new life.

Repentance modified the *washing* that John proclaimed. When dealing with adults, God's word is proclaimed. The word works repentance (sorrow and faith in the proclaimed word). Repentant people desire God's forgiveness - both the removal and guilt and the assurance that their sins are fully and freely forgiven. Baptism does both. Here the sins that specifically troubled them were confesses and washed ways.

⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him. They were baptized by him in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins.

Some have troubles with the world *whole* and *all*. This is a standard figure of speech called hyperbole. It's an exaggerated statement meant to communicate that masses of people from these two areas came out to John. It is not meant to be taken literally. Scripture uses standard forms of speech to communicate truth. Forcing Scripture to only be literal is imposing an unnatural straight-jacket on Scripture. Context identifies the use of figures of speech.

15. Early church fathers tell us that in this Gospel Mark provides a written record of the accounts he heard from Peter. Recalling the Peter was a disciple of John the Baptist, this text hints that Peter may have been an eyewitness to this event. Identify the telltale signs of an eyewitness.

¹⁰ Just as Jesus came up out of the water, he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love. I am well pleased with you."

What is the significance of this post baptism event in Jesus' life?