

Dr. Meredith Kline, Prologue, Lecture 32

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Opening prayer: *Our Father in Heaven, we read in thy word that “blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, the one whose sins are covered, yes blessed is the one to whom the Lord does not impute sin.” This is the word of the gospel, we thank thee that this gospel has come unto us, even unto us who in times past were far off and were not nigh unto the people of thy covenant. We who indeed were not thy people. We thank thee that in thy rich mercy, in the New Covenant the word of Christ has gone forth unto the nations. In the power of thy spirit that word has come into our lives and experience as it has come down to the church of all generations. We thank thee that that word has come to us indeed and demonstration of the Spirit’s power so that our sinful hearts have been changed, our deadness has been altered. We have come to life in Jesus Christ and we have seen in him, our savior, the one by whom indeed our sins have been covered, the one unto whom our sins were imputed and his righteousness unto us. How wondrous oh, Lord, this gospel. We rejoice in it, we thank thee that again and again we may turn to thy word and be reminded of and reassured of its truth and we pray that in our experience tonight that may be the case again. We thank thee for these weeks that we have had together and we pray that the fruit of the study of the Scripture might be unto our own building up in the faith and unto our improvement as we seek to minister thy word to others as we find them in this needy world all about us. Send us forth then as those who are the fishers of men, as those who go forth with the message of Christ and him crucified. Bless us we pray in our own lives and make us a blessing to thy people for thy name’s sake, we pray, Amen.*

Circumcision and Baptism discussion continued

Alright, now let’s see, the first thing that I thought we might do just picking up where we ended up last time, which you may remember was with the

discussion of the sign of membership and incorporation into the covenant--the Old Testament circumcision. Then we followed up with the comparison of the role of baptism, its meaning, its function, and its application in the New. Now we went through that pretty fast and you didn't have any time for any questions or discussion, I recall. I don't know if I should just open it up at this point for such discussion. But at least let me do this, in *By Oath Consigned*, we're at a point where we are moving into a discussion of baptism and proceed to show how in terms of its symbolic meaning and its theological significance, in terms of principles of its application who should receive it, and that the baptism does correspond to what we find in circumcision.

John's and Jesus' Baptisms

At that point I deal with the transition that we find from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant where Christian baptism comes into play and that transition is in terms then of the ministry of John the forerunner of our Lord who was also involved in a baptism. What I tried to do is to take this significance of John the Baptist's baptism and try to understand it in the light of his particular role at the end of the Mosaic economy and then to see how our Lord himself, was actually involved with John at that stage of things. So the baptism of John was actually being practiced by Jesus. Although it says, that, not Jesus, but his disciples did that kind of baptizing. But Jesus himself was involved with this closing Old Covenant ministry of John and his baptism. So I argue that surely then when our Lord institutes New Covenant baptism, that there was bound to be some continuity in basic meaning between this New Testament baptism, which our Lord instituted and that Johannine baptism which our Lord had been involved with in the early stage of his ministry. So that is what is going on here. The question is, we are trying to make the point, that you will recall in terms of the fundamental symbolism of both circumcision and baptism that what is being conveyed is the idea of the divine judgment--the judgment ordeal. All those who are entering into the covenant do so with the prospect and in view of the day of accountability

before the Lord of the covenant. The rite of entrance into the church portrays that ultimate judgment ordeal. We, of course, went on to say that you know the generic meaning then of both circumcision and baptism is that of death, its circumcision is the sword of the Lord and baptism is the flood waters; the destructive waters of death. So generically and symbolically that is what is going on.

Judgment and death: 2 ways to experience it

Yet then we saw that the generic idea of judgment and death can be experienced in two specific ways. It can be experienced either in terms of a faith identification with Christ, or apart from such and that final judgment which is symbolized in circumcision or in baptism. If that final judgment is experienced by someone apart from ever having made contact by faith and identification with Christ, then of course that death judgment is precisely and only that will be experienced.

Nevertheless, through the purpose of God, the proper purpose of the whole redemptive program, and therefore of the signs of the redemptive covenant, the proper purpose of God, of course, is that people should be saved and not condemned. So the other specific meaning of these sort of rites is the one that they have in the experience of those who undergo that final judgment, that death experience in Christ. So he has experienced the death for us. We get into the ark, instead of being outside of the ark; we go through the floodwaters of judgment in the ark and thus we find safe passage through the wrath and to resurrection on the far side. If we are baptized into Christ's death and so on by faith we make that identification, then we will experience resurrection. So there are these two specific outcomes that they follow. The two different kinds of ultimate wrath, judgment, death are to be undergone. We are all going to undergo that one way or another. So these are the two alternatives.

Of course, as I say, what you are being urged to do in connection with this reception of either circumcision or baptism you are not just being acquainted with the fact that judgment with the ways that you are being invited in terms of the

whole gospel with which these signs come to us you are being urged and invited to identify, of course, by faith with Christ and to undergo baptism with the baptism of his death with which he was baptized and, of course, with the outcome. So that is what we are trying to establish here.

But then the basic symbolic point is that these rites depict the judgment of God that comes upon those who have received this rite. Of course, this judgment of God is going to be on those who are outside this situation all together. But, nevertheless, even those who are within covenant are reminded here in a special way of the fact of this accountability day that faces all folks.

Babylonian exile and the election of Israel

In *By Oath Consigned* then let's begin on page 51. Here we have been talking about the structure of these covenants and, of course, there was the Old Covenant and we've seen that it was one of the works, that its upper for level. It is in terms of that Old Covenant that the arrangement which involved a national election of Israel with the enjoyment of a typological kingdom on the basis of the principle of works, as the principle of tenure. How long they could hold onto that arrangement then was a going on. Israel's enjoyment of the kingdom land that God bestowed upon them there was contingent upon, it was based on, their fidelity, on their covenant keeping.

Of course, that is the point of the Babylonian exile. They had transgressed their way past the point of God's continuing the covenant, so there was a rupture, there was a break, there was a discontinuity, even already in the Old Testament days, within the ongoing Old Covenant and whereby Israel then is termed *lo ammi*,-- "not my people anymore." But then of course they are reinstated the whole program as an act of grace to get this whole arrangement going in the first place, then even if its ongoing it was dependent on works. Then there was due to another act of grace that they are restored to the land, but of course, they are restored again unto Moses, under the law and under the works principle.

So this is where we are coming now, this is the final point where after the

restoration from Babylonian exile things are going on. The prophets of the previous days have been ignored, they've been rejected, they've been maltreated and so on. The word of the that Lord was faithfully and persistently sent to them has been despised. So the exile had to come and now there are new prophets with Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi and so on. Then they are presenting the word of the Lord still, but still it is a matter of works.

John as the last of OT prophets

Now we come to the end of that story and we come to John, the last of these Old Testament prophets . This ministry of the prophets through this whole period is very much one of being God's lawyers, conducting his lawsuit against the people, the historical books of the Old Testament are all devoted to the twin theme of God has been faithful to the covenant and Israel has been constantly breaking covenant. That's what is going on all the way through the message of the prophets.

That is what continued to go on.

Now we adding a final point where this old preliminary arrangement is going to be terminated in judgment. This works arrangement is going to prove to fail and as a matter of fact. Of course, that is part of the whole purpose of God setting it up in the first place. By their failure the Israelite community, and this is the message which the whole world can grab ahold of, by recognizing what Israel did is what everyone else, all of the rest of us have done. So what this is teaching Israel and through Israel to all of the rest of us, is the complete futility of our own efforts, by our works to secure in the first place or to hang onto in any way the ultimate blessings of God. So this works arrangement was one, that after all, was driving us to the cross. It was driving us to Christ, but then that purpose had to work itself out and it works itself out in the fall of Israel. The collapse and termination of that whole peculiar package of arrangements of national election, typological kingdom's work principle, that package which characterizes this whole Old Covenant era was about to be terminated.

So God raises up John as the prophet of this last generation. He is the prophet who stands right on the brink of that ordeal which circumcision had been pointing towards all this time. The cutting off in death, and here, of course, what is in view is this national election—this corporate experience. This whole thing was going to be terminated and cut off. John stands there and the axe is being laid to the root of the tree, the ultimate circumcision is about to take place--the ultimate cutting rite, the axe being laid to the root of the tree warns them. This Old Testament order is about to go down. The question is then how to understand precisely the nature of John's role and function historically at that point.

Lawsuit stages: messenger of the ultimatum

I have a heading where John is called "the messenger of the ultimatum." In the lawsuit process there were two stages. There was the first stage when the prophets would come to the people and warn them that by breaking the covenant they have put themselves in peril. The first stage then among them was tantamount to a call to repentance. There was still time to wage their ways and to ward off the infliction of the curses of the covenant, to extend the days of the blessings. That was the first stage.

If the people ignore that first stage of the lawsuit then the lawsuit would move into its second stage. The second stage then was the ultimatum stage where it's not so much now an expectation that there will be a proper response to the arrangement instead it's pretty much announcing doom is at hand. That's where John finds himself.

The precise relationship and the baptism administered by John the forerunner of the Christian church, this I guess is what I tried to explain before, that there's that continuity between them. So by understanding the significance of John's baptism, I go on to say what I just said to you, how we can understand more clearly the meaning of Christian baptism. In order, however, to see the mission of John the Forerunner in proper historical perspective it will be useful to review certain procedures followed in ancient covenant administration. I just did

that for you--I discussed the lawsuit and how that worked.

If the messenger, the great king was rejected, or imprisoned, especially if he was killed, the legal process moved into that second phase. This was a declaration of war as an execution of the sacred sanctions of the treaty and so on. Now the mission of the Old Testament prophets, those messengers of Yahweh who were to enforce the covenant mediated through Moses is surely to be understood within this judicial framework of the covenant lawsuit and so too the mission of John the Baptist.

Parable of the vineyard and John the Baptist

John was sent with the word of ultimatum from the Lord to his covenant violating vassal in Israel. Was it not precisely this judicial process that Jesus had in mind when he interpreted the succession of divine messengers to the parable of the vineyard. So we think here of that vineyard parable in Matthew 21 which, of course, roots in Isaiah, where there are actually two vineyard sections—the one in chapter 5 and the other in Isaiah 27. We are familiar with Jesus' parable of the vineyard. The servants of the parable were sent by the Lord of the vineyard to demand from him his due. That's what the prophets had been doing all along. That's what John as the ultimatum prophet was doing. The Lord is the one to whom the tribute and the devotion of the people belong and they had come asking that of the people. But the husbandmen had repudiated it throughout the nation. They handled the messengers shamefully. They beat them and stoned them, sent them away empty, and even killed some of them.

Now when Jesus told this parable he was thinking most immediately of the people's rejection of John the Baptist. That the rejection of John was particularly in view of this parable is indicated by the location of the parable immediately after the record of Jesus' counter challenge to the Jewish authorities and respect to the origin of John the Baptist. He had just been disputing with them and particularly he had raised this issue of the origin of John's baptism. Then he tells this story about the vineyard. Jesus himself was, of course, the Lord of the vineyard's son

who was cast out and slain. Because Israel had repudiated his lordship and despised his ultimatum, God would inflict on them the vengeance of the covenant. In fact Jesus, as the final messenger of the covenant, you see as we said, was involved with John in this ministry. Jesus at the early stage was involved with John and this ministry, even in the act of baptism. So Jesus is also then playing a role along with John in terms of this whole Old Testament economy. So our Lord then has not only vowed to introduce then the whole New Covenant but also then he figures in at this point and at this final ultimatum to the Old Covenant community.

The Ministry of John the Baptist

I have a paragraph where I tried to show some reflections of ancient covenant lawsuit patterns in the words of Jesus. Then, to this same effect as Jesus' parable of the vineyard, in terms of interpreting the role of John from Malachi's prophetic interpretation of the coming Lord and his forerunner. So what was John's role? How was it cast by the prophetic word of Malachi? Malachi 2 depicted the Lord and his forerunner as the bearers and ultimatum of final verdict. Malachi spoke of two messengers, the one called "my messenger," the Lord's messenger, and the other the "messenger of the covenant." Of the first, that is of "my messenger," Malachi wrote, "he shall prepare the way before me." Again Malachi spoke of a coming of Elijah as a precursor of the great and terrible day of the Lord. So this is the function of the coming forerunner. He is the Elijah figure. He stands there right at the threshold of the great and terrible day of the Lord. His mission was to be one of warning, lest Israel's Lord smite them with a curse--the curse of the Old Covenant. For at his fiery advent the Lord would refine his people by judgment, Malachi 3:2 and following.

Now, what is narrated in the gospels concerning the ministry of John supports fully with the understanding of his role as that of the messenger of the covenant to declare the Lord's ultimatum of eschatological judgment. The voice in the wilderness describes the kingdom of heaven is at hand. It warned of the wrath

to come. It warned of the vanity of reliance on external, earthly relationships, and even descent from Abraham. If the trees did not bring forth satisfactory fruit, if they were not properly circumcised unto the Lord, then they must be cursed as a cumbrance to the ground and cut off. The axe was even now laid unto the root to inflict this judgment of circumcision.

So John is expounding really that the meaning of their original circumcision here as something that was pointing to this final act of cutting off a judgment. Now he says that day of circumcision judgment, the axe laid to the roots is at hand—repent. So he is addressing the community which is about to be doomed and, of course, he is offering that through his baptism, a word which calls to repentance unto the remission of sins. So out of this national catastrophe and fall the opportunity is given to the true remnant, to enter into this baptism of John which symbolizes this whole ministry that he is engaged in. By entering into this baptism, which points to the messianic suffering and baptism, by entering into that baptism and identifying with the coming Christ, the remnant community could anticipate the judgment of God and in Christ escape from it. Whereas the rest who just perused their rebellious way apart from this opportunity would experience this cutting off that was threatened.

Now one would expect that the baptism of John as the sign of such a mission ultimatum, would portray by its own symbolic form, the threatened ordeal of judgment. That concept of it, that symbolism, is not then always appreciated. It is related in order to discover its meeting to various washings and ceremonial lustrations and so on of this kind. What I am suggesting is that they are not the primary symbolism in terms of John's whole mission and his message here. This particular rite that condensed the whole thing must be conveying that idea of the judgment of God.

Baptism as water ordeal: Noah, Exodus, Jordan crossing

As for further support for it, I argue that the idea of waters playing a role of an ordeal element in a judgment of the gods as a part of the common context of the

extra-biblical world but of the Old Testament as well. I think that we probably, when we were talking about Noah's ark and flood and so on we said some of these things. But in the Old Testament itself, the symbolism of water is precisely in terms of these great acts of judgment. For example, the flood or the crossing of the sea, or the crossing of the Jordan all are high moments in the drama of Old Testament salvation and judgment involve this kind of water ordeal, where in the flood then God judges the whole world by a water baptism.

Then as we noted Peter soon uses the language of baptism to describe what went on in the event of the flood that was a baptismal experience. The background of John's water baptism is a certainty to be related to these episodes of baptism of judgment in the flood.

Then also, as 1 Cor. 10 points out, the crossing of the Yam Suph--the Red Sea. The Exodus was another baptismal thing, where the Israelites were all baptized into Moses there, and the sea, and the cloud. The destructive aspect of those baptismal waters was especially experienced by the Egyptians who pursued after them and all perished. Those who went over identified with Moses, of course, went through the baptism safely. Those baptized identified with Christ and go through the judgment safely. Here those who were baptized who go to Moses back there, went through the experience safely, but the experience itself symbolized by the waters, was one of death and then again at the crossing of the Jordan. So that being the role of judgment of waters and the high moments of previous history it symbolized the divine judgment. That would certainly would point to the meaning of John's baptism along that line. That's the kind of thing that I'm discussing on pages 55, 56 and 57.

The time had come when here in the Jordan River where once the Lord had declared through an ordeal that the promised land belonged to Israel, he was requiring the Israelites to confess their forfeiture of the blessings of his kingdom and their liability to the wrath to come. So it was a word of threaten curse and death. Yet John's proclamation was preaching of good tidings to the people, Luke

3:18. It was a preaching of good tidings because it invited the repentant to anticipate the messianic judgment in a symbolic ordeal in the Jordan, so securing for themselves beforehand, a verdict of remission of sins against the coming judgment, just as we by faith in Christ already receive a verdict of justification against the impending great day of judgment. To seal a holy remnant of baptism unto the messianic kingdom was the proper purpose. It symbolizes death and that death experience can be experienced with themselves. Death can be experienced in a proper way, by faith in the Messiah, the Savior, and then it will be unto life which was the proper purpose of the bearer of the ultimatum, the great king.

Further support of baptism as rite of water ordeal (judgment)

Further support for the interpretation of the baptismal rite as sign of ordeal is found in the biblical use of “baptism” the verb or “baptism” the noun, these words are used to denote historic ordeals. I have already mention 1 Cor. 10:2 and you’ve seen the crossing of the Red Sea as a baptism. In 1 Peter 3:20-21, the flood as baptismal terminology is used for these ordeals. Well, of particular relevance at this point is the fact that John the Baptist himself used the verb “baptism” for the impending ordeal in which the one mightier than he would wield his winnowing fork to separate from the covenant kingdom those whose circumcision had by want of Abrahamic faith become uncircumcision and who must therefore be cut off from the congregation of Israel and devoted to unquenchable flames. With reference to this judicially discriminating ordeal with its dual destinies of garner and Gehenna, John declared “he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” So in this kind of expression clearly the meaning of baptism comes forth. It is not primarily the idea of cleansing or washing. It’s the idea of this dramatic judgment death. “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire” and clearly the fire is that of judgment.

Now John did more than describe the imminent messianic ordeal as an act of baptism, he instituted an explicit comparison between that baptismal ordeal which was to be executed by the coming one and his own, that is, John’s own

baptismal rite. John said “I indeed baptize you with water, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. He will baptize you in an act of judgment” with its dual possibilities. The anticipation of that symbolizing that I now baptize you with water, but clearly then what he is telling us is that the meaning of his baptism is pointing to that act of messianic judgment. John called attention to the great differences. His own baptism was only a symbol whereas the coming one would baptize men in an actual ordeal with the very elements of divine power and judgment. But the significant fact at present is not that John’s baptism was only a symbol but that according to his own exposition of it, what John’s baptism symbolized was the coming messianic judgment. That certainty and force of his double use of baptism in this connection.

Jesus being baptized—judgment?

Have you ever had a problem with the fact that Jesus undergoes baptism and he’s not a sinner? What does he have to undergo? But if you understand what the meaning of baptism is to come under the judgment of God then Jesus willingness to undertake this rite is much more easily understood and it becomes an act commitment on his part. He enters into the situation, commits himself to it, and comes under this judgment of God. In view of his whole role in history; this is why he’s come into the world, of course, to do precisely that. Here he commits himself by baptism to the cross, if you will. As covenant servant Jesus submitted in symbol here, to the judgment of God, the God of the covenant and the waters of baptism. But for Jesus as the lamb of God to submit to the symbol of judgment was to offer himself up to the curse of the covenant, by his baptism. Jesus consecrated himself unto his sacrificial death in the judicial ordeal of the cross. Such an understanding of his baptism is reflected in Jesus’ own reference to his coming passion as a baptism. Jesus said “I have a baptism to be baptized with” and, of course, he is referring to the cross.

So this whole kind of evidence seems to me to point so clearly and powerfully to that the basic meaning of baptism as death that one wonders why

we, for the most part miss that and just reduce it to some washing ceremony and miss this whole central concept of judgment. So Jesus symbolic baptism unto judgment appropriately concluded with a divine verdict, the verdict of justification, expressed by the heavenly voice and sealed by the Spirit's anointing and so forth.

Summing up: the meaning of John's baptismal sign

Alright, so summing up here: John the Baptist was sent as a messenger of the Old Covenant to its final generation. His concern was not to prepare the world at large for the coming of Christ, but to summon Israel unto the Lord to whom they had sworn allegiance at Sinai. To swear allegiance to him err his wrath broke out upon them and the Mosaic kingdom was terminated in the flames of messianic judgment. The demand in which John brought to Israel is focused in his call to baptism. This baptism is not an ordinance to be observed by Israel in their generation the way that circumcision had been but it was a special sign for that terminal generation epitomizing the particular crisis in covenant history, represented by the mission of John as messenger of the Lord's ultimatum.

From the angle of repentance and faith John's ultimatum could be seen as a gracious invitation to the marriage feast of the suzerain's son and John's baptism as a seal of the remission of sins and bright with promise disregards Jesus' submission to John's baptism, for the passing of Jesus through the divine judgment and the water rite in the Jordan, meant to John's baptism what the passing of the Lord through the curse knife, rite of Genesis 15. Remember, we discussed that last time and what that meant to Abraham's circumcision.

In each case the divine action constituted an invitation to all recipients of these covenant signs of consecration. To identify themselves by faith with the Lord himself in his passage through the ordeal. So they might be assured of emerging from the overwhelming curse with the blessing. Jesus passes through the water ordeal with the others who were baptized in the Jordan was also one in meaning with the Lord's presence with Israel and the theophanic pillar crossing

through the sea and so forth—there's another illustration of that. So this was what the meaning of John's baptismal sign was. Its appropriated then with his whole distinctive function there. That's the end of the older economy when the day of the termination of that work's arrangement was in view.

Then the next chapter makes the transition and shows how Jesus was involved with what we were just talking about. Jesus through his disciples participated in this baptismal ministry that John was engaged with, threatening Israel with destruction, calling out a remnant to come to the Messiah, to undergo the judgment in him.

The completion of John's baptism: final ultimatum over

So one of the links between Christian baptism and John's baptism is the baptism which Jesus authorized and his disciples administered during the very period of John's preaching and baptizing. I argue that there has got to be continuity in meaning between the later Christian baptism, which our Lord institutes and that this earlier baptism. When Jesus began his public ministry, this lawsuit we were just talking about, God's lawsuit with Israel was in that ultimatum stage when Jesus began his ministry. At this point the judicial function of Jesus coincided with that of John. Jesus just had the effect of confirming John's witness—a final warning to Israel. Especially to Israel's officialdom in the Judean area. Since the meaning of the baptismal rite administered by these messengers of the covenant, John and Jesus derived from the official nature of their mission the import of Jesus' baptism, although separately conducted, would be essentially the same as John's. Thus it was a sign of the covenant lawsuit against Israel. The baptismal rite of Jesus was, like John's, a symbol of eminent of judgment ordeal on the people of the Old Covenant.

This interpretation of Jesus' early baptizing in terms of the concurrent ultimatum mission of John is strikingly confirmed by this fact: the evident cessation of this baptism that Jesus was involved with, the cessation once John was imprisoned. So John engages in this final call and that call is rejected and that

rejection of that call is registered in the act of his imprisonment and Jesus' involvement with that ministry and that baptism and at that particular point. By suffering that voice in the wilderness to be silenced, the Lord of the covenant concluded the ultimatum stage in his lawsuit against Israel.

It was no hope beyond this now, the Lord is judging that Israel's responsible representatives had by now decisively rejected this warning. The profound satisfaction in which the defiant rulers must have registered that John's imprisonment was seen the final and intolerable expression of their contempt for the heavenly authority in which John had come to them with. They hadn't accepted that he was from the Lord and now he is imprisoned and they gloat and delight over that. That expresses their final devilish rejection of the Lord and his demands.

Imprisonment of John and the transition in Jesus' ministry: old order to new

Hence the imprisonment of John was the signal for the departure of Jesus to Galilee, and they in terms of understanding the stages in our Lord's ministry there is this earlier stage in which he is involved in doing this. John incarnated that Old Testament oriented warning, it is over. Now Jesus turns from the Judean area, he heads for Galilee and he proceeds to preach the coming of the kingdom, the New Covenant order. The former presentation in the Gospels, especially in Matthew and Mark is such as to call attention to the fact that it was the imprisonment of John that prompted Jesus to initiate the new ministry in Galilee to turn from the Old Testament order to the New Testament order. That One's ministry in Galilee whose epical nature, the Synoptic Gospels are clearly concerned to impress upon us. The Synoptic Gospels begin right at this point to return the teaching of Jesus that now the time was fulfilled and the kingdom at hand. The Old Testament preparation was designed in a particular way to drive people to the cross now it's that time for the announcement of this new stage.

Thus implicitly the gospels traced to John's imprisonment, the ending of the early Judean ministry of Jesus for this particular baptismal rite. That is that

they implicitly connect the cessation of Jesus' early baptism with the termination of the ultimatum stage in the covenant lawsuit against Israel.

Significance of Christian Baptism

So much then for understanding the linkage here and the transition between the old order and the new one and how our Lord is involved in both. Now we are especially interested in the way that each stage comes to expression in a ritual of water, a baptizing experience. Can we doubt then that there is in Christian baptism that same essential significance that there was in the Johannine baptism? It is pointing us, within the Christian community now, again even though as a whole this is not a works arrangement but it is a grace arrangement with a lesson. Not all within this covenant are properly there. We keep putting up our two circles on the board: big circle "covenant," smaller circle "elect."

So the rite of incorporation into the New Covenant is a baptismal sign that signifies basically the judgment. The day of accountability for those who are within the covenant and those who are not in Christ then will undergo this baptism of judgment and death. But meanwhile, of course, we are invited by this same ritual to recognize that Christ has undergone that baptism for us. So we can be sure that already by faith in Christ we are beyond that probation that we have passed that judgment day in Christ and not just justified but we are approved in terms of his act of obedience, approved as though those who have earned heaven. But nevertheless, the baptismal sign itself is one which is fraught with this dramatic meaning of the impending judgment of God, that should be driving us to see the cross, to come into the ark and so on.

So that, I think may suffice for this time to recapitulate and add a little bit to our discussion at and many points.

Student Question: On the transition between the two covenants and the symbol of baptism is there any significance to the Old Testament being bloody and baptism not bloody?

Kline's Response: I've never been inclined to put any stock in it because I

don't know what the biblical evidence of that would be. In circumcision, the only one who sees that as a bloody rite is Zipporah who fails to see the importance of the whole thing. I'm inclined to see the two of them as two different symbols for one reality without any particular reflection on the particular mode.

The classical defense of infant baptism is related to the promise. I was arguing that the concept of the promise that Paul brings out in Romans 9-11 has to do with election. Isaac is the seed of promise and Jacob is the seed of promise not Esau. So the concept of the promise equals election. Then I was saying that election cannot be the rationale or ground for the bestowal of baptism or in the Old Testament circumcision. That's precisely like the cases with Jacob and Esau. It is bestowed on Esau. Esau is identified with the covenant community even though he is not elect. In that case it is all the more compelling. The fact that he is not elect is already known by his parents before his birth. So insofar as the Presbyterian principle is rite arguing the continuity between circumcision and baptism and they are. Then they have to deal with the discontinuity with circumcision's connection to the promise. That was true too for many of the other Israelites because many of them rebelled and broke the covenant yet they were all circumcised. So the simple fact that election was not the basis for bestowing the rite of circumcision.

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