

IRONSIDE’S ARGUMENT

- Ultra-dispensationalists “make a great deal of the fact that in these [prison] epistles we do not have any distinct instruction as to the baptizing of believers, or the observance of the Lord’s Supper.” (pg. 57)
 - It is agreed that this argument from silence is weak, and of the same nature as a Church of Christ hermeneutic. One would expect a prohibition (as in circumcision) and not just a silence.
- “These brethren, by a process of sophistical reasoning, try to prove that baptism belonged only to an earlier dispensation and was in some sense meritorious, as though it had in itself saving virtue, but that since the dispensation of grace has been fully revealed, there is no place for baptism, because of changed conditions for salvation. To state this argument is but to expose its fallacy.” (pg. 57)
 - Rather than "sophistical reasoning" there is a valid argument to be made.
 - Did Baptism belong to a different dispensation? It was performed by John the Baptist, which was obviously prior to Acts 2, when Ironside proposes the current dispensation began.
 - Did it have some "meritorious" or "saving virtue" as Ironside claims the ultra-dispensationalists teach?
 - Actually, no Jew ever viewed baptism (micvah) as either meritorious or saving.
 - It was *always* done symbolically. It was never viewed as having any "saving virtue," for prior to this dispensation the individual salvation only came with the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. Baptism was symbolic preparation for the Kingdom.
 - To talk of "changed conditions of salvation" is to misunderstand salvation.
 - There was no individual, immediate salvation prior to this dispensation. There was only waiting for the Kingdom to see if you would inherit a portion within the Kingdom.
 - There was no "personal relationship" or individual forgiveness of sins. An atonement of sins came through the sacrifices. Prior to Jesus (to state the obvious), there was no death, burial, and resurrection on which to place one's faith.
 - An argument can be made that baptism had a Kingdom purpose. An equally strong argument can be made that a symbolic baptism is no more out-of-place in this non-Kingdom age than an observance of Passover.
 - Ironside's comment, "to state this argument is but to expose its fallacy" is fallacious in its statement." He fallaciously states an argument and thus does not "state this argument" but rather states a straw man.
- Let one point be absolutely clear: No one was ever saved in any dispensation on any other ground than the finished work of Christ. (pg 57).
 - As good as this sounds, what "finished work of Christ" was there before the work of Christ was finished?
 - Be reminded that the Apostles themselves did not trust in the finished work of Christ during the time of Christ's walk on earth.
 - It is very important to understand that to deny this claim is NOT to make a claim of another way of salvation. Rather, one could (and should) say, "no one was ever saved prior to the finished work of Christ."
 - One may object, "what of Hebrews 11!!?"
 - This faith of **the elders** simply provided a **good report** (Heb. 11:2), not an individual salvation.
 - They died and went to Sheol and had opportunity to enter into Christ when Christ preached to the spirits in prison. They will be judged at the resurrection and will enter into the Kingdom.
 - They could NEVER claim, while on earth, that they were saved by their faith in the "finished work of Christ," for they would not have even been able to articulate what this finished work was.
- “In all the ages before the cross, God justified men by faith; in all the years since, men have been justified in exactly the same way.” (pg. 57-58).
 - Ironside makes the fundamental mistake of believing there has never been a dispensational change in the most fundamental of areas: Man's right-relationship with God.
 - This is, in effect, the denial of dispensationalism by a premier dispensationalist.
 - Ironside must continue his statement by disregarding the very real requirements of a right-standing with God, along with those who hold them.

- “Adam believed God and was clothed with coats of skin, a picture of one becoming the righteousness of God in Christ. Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. Nevertheless, afterwards he was circumcised; but that circumcision, the apostle tells us, was simply a seal of the righteousness he had by faith. And throughout all the Old Testament dispensation, however legalistic Jews may have observed the ordinance of circumcision and thought of it as having in itself some saving virtue, it still remained in God’s sight, as in the beginning, only a seal, where there was genuine faith, of that righteousness which He imputed.” (pg. 58).
 - The disregard of the requirements was expected, and now seen. Let us consider Ironside's statements:
 - "Adam believed God..." --what did Adam believe God about, and how do we know that he believed God? Adam is not included in Hebrews 11, and Genesis 3 has no statement whatsoever about Adam's belief. Furthermore, nothing has been given beyond the promise of a Redeemer. If a person could not be saved by Genesis 3:15 today, then they could not have been saved by the same verse then.
 - "Abraham believed..." but what did he believe? And did this mean that he was inhabited with the Spirit? And if he didn't have the Spirit, was he saved (see Rom. 8:9). Could ANYONE at ANYTIME be saved based on what Abraham believed?
 - Concerning Ironside's anti-semitic sounding comment on the "legalistic Jews" and how they thought of circumcision "as having in itself some saving virtue" but actually was "only a seal," what would one do with God's original instruction to Abraham which says that the one who is not circumcised, "that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant" (Gen. 17:14)? If it was "in the beginning, only a seal," then it was a *required* seal.
- “No one was ever saved through the sacrifices offered under law, for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin.” (pg. 58).
 - This statement is exactly right, but given with the implication that "Bullingerites" believe the opposite.
 - Those who are Mid-Acts or "Hyper" believe that Hebrews 10:4 is truth, yet they do not make the mistake of teaching that the blood of Jesus was a propitiation before it became a propitiation.
 - While Ironside argues that "no one was ever saved through the sacrifices" (a straw man), he also argues that people *were saved* before the payment for sin had been made. This is an untenable position (and commonly held).
- “Nevertheless, wherever there was real faith in Israel, the sacrifices were offered because of the instruction given in the Word of God, and in these sacrifices the work of Christ was pictured continually.” (pg. 58)
 - What would prohibit sacrifices today if they were nothing more than a picture of the work of Christ? How were they different from the Lord's Supper itself?
- Christian baptism has its beginning in resurrection. (pg. 59)
 - This is only marginally true. Christian baptism had its *roots* in Jewish baptism, and it would be of utmost difficulty to argue that the baptism at Pentecost was not Jewish baptism done in a Jewish way in a Jewish ceremonial pool.
- “It is evident in the Book of Acts that there is a somewhat different presentation of this, according as to whether the message is addressed to Jews in outward covenant relation with God or to Gentiles who are strangers to the covenants of promise. Paul calls these two aspects of the one Gospel, the Gospel of the circumcision and the Gospel of the uncircumcision. The Jew being already a member of a nation which, up to the cross, had been recognized as in covenant relationship with God, was called upon to be baptized to save himself from that untoward generation” (pg. 59)
 - Note the following:
 - Ironside recognizes that there is a different presentation to Jews and Gentiles.
 - Ironside implies that the nation is no longer recognized in a covenant relationship with God, a status lost at the cross.
 - Ironside says, "The Jew...was called upon to be baptized to *save himself*" thus teaching the very thing he accuses Bullinger of teaching. (Ironside continues the above phrase by saying, "That is, to step out, as it were, from the nation, no longer claiming national privilege, nor yet being exposed to national judgment. With the Gentile, it was otherwise. He was simply called upon to believe the Gospel, and believing it, to confess his faith in baptism." (pg. 59)
- “Surely one is guilty of gross perversion of Scripture who dares to teach that since Paul’s imprisonment, the Lord’s Supper should no longer be observed, when the Holy Ghost has said, “As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He come.”” (pg. 64)

- While I would not go so far as "gross perversion," I agree with Ironside that there is nothing in Scripture that teaches that the Lord's Supper should not longer be observed. However, the exact manner and timing of its observance is given no instruction in Scripture, and must certainly be a matter of minor importance.

RANDY WHITE'S ARGUMENT

- The determination about both Baptism and the Lord's supper depends on one's answer to the following two questions:
 - When did the current dispensation begin?
 - If in Acts 2, then both ordinances.
 - If in mid-Acts, then possibly both ordinances, or none, but likely just the Lord's Supper.
 - If after Acts 28, then likely neither ordinance.
 - Is it possible to use Jewish observances in a meaningful (and non-legalistic) manner within the church?