

1 Pet. 3:21-22 (LD 19, Q/A 50-51) “An Appeal to the Right Hand”

For the Children: Imagine If you had a friend whose parents were very rich - millionaires. You would probably think that this friendship could be very helpful – say, if you needed to borrow some money. Think what great birthday presents you might get from them! Well, we have a Friend who is far richer and more powerful than anyone on earth. But of course, we don't love Him simply because He can give us good things in this life or the next. We love Him for who He is. We are also thankful that He can give us the things that we most need: faith, forgiveness, eternal life. These are the things that help us to have a quiet conscience, rather than fearing to face God's judgement. **Questions:** How does the Lord Jesus enable us to have a good conscience? What does His sitting at God's “right hand” have to do with that? How does baptism remind us of Jesus' cleansing work?

Introduction:

First Point: An Appeal to God

- 1) Prayer or Pledge: The word “appeal” here can be a prayer or plea to God for a good conscience; or a pledge. If a pledge, it could be the believer's pledge to strive for holiness with God's help; or, God's pledge that He gives that help.
- 2) A Good Conscience: The plea/pledge is about a good conscience. That does not simply mean that our guilt-feelings are removed. The conscience either accuses or defends us (Rom. 2:15). A good conscience is one that accepts God's promise that He will commend us in Christ. To keep a good conscience is, then, a matter of faith. See 1 Tim. 1:5,19; 3:9; and 1 Pet. 3:16. We can be commanded to keep a good conscience in the sense that we keep on trusting God's promises in Christ and turn away from acting in a way that will damage our conscience.
- 3) The Connection with Baptism: The apostle links the statement “baptism now saves you” to what he says about an appeal for a good conscience. Baptism, he argues, “corresponds” to what happened to Noah and his family: they were saved through the waters of the flood, but the same water judged the wicked. This provides an analogy (a “correspondence”) of baptism: the water of baptism speaks of salvation for those who turn to Christ; but Christ's sacrifice also shows what the sin of the unrepentant deserves. The message of baptism is either believed, unto salvation, or rejected, unto condemnation. Note, it is not the physical baptism that saves, the washing away of dirt from the body; it is the truth of the analogy – the washing away of sins by Christ, the Gospel – that saves. Baptism is also an appeal to God – a plea for His mercy through Christ's blood; a pledge from Him that this is how He saves; and a pledge from us that we will seek to live the “washed” life with His help.

Second Point: The Ground of Our Appeal

- 1) The Exalted Christ: The basis on which we appeal is not the fact we have been physically baptized. The ground is Christ. His death results in our cleansing (Heb. 9:14; 10:21-22). But Peter emphasizes especially His exaltation, to remind us that He has the power to grant such an appeal. He has been raised from the dead, seated on the Father's right hand, and all powers in heaven and earth have been subjected to Him. This guarantees us of the cleansing that leads to a good conscience.
- 2) Help from the Ruler of All: The Father now rules all things through the Son. His seat at the “Right Hand” implies pre-eminent trust, power and authority. Since we are “in Him” as our Head and Representative, we share in this power and authority. Moreover, the Lord Jesus intercedes for us in heaven. He also protects us from that which would destroy us.
- 3) Help from His Spirit: As we also saw previously with the benefits of Christ's ascension, so with His “heavenly session”: He sends forth His Spirit to help us on earth and give us gifts – so we can recognize, repent of and resist sin; so we can appeal to God for forgiveness in Christ. These benefits of the heavenly session of Christ are what enable us to have a “good conscience.”

Conclusion: