

Phineas F. Bresee Sermon Notes – Acts 1:5

Every attempt has been made to transcribe these notes accurately. Indecipherable text appears in brackets [-]. Abbreviations transcribed as they appear in the notes.

Fourth Sermon in the Acts of the Apostles. [i.5]

For John truly baptized with water &c. And as a reference & comment.

Matt iii – 11-12, I indeed baptize you with water &c. The double purification of the human soul. Especially the purification by fire to which the text refers. The ministry of John the Baptist not only has its historic place in the history of the salvation of men. But it has a typical meaning in the Christian experience of man. His ministry was not a new thing. It was of the old dispensation of types & shadows. It belonged to the dispensation of ceremonial law. It was an effort to show what that disp. really was. It was a struggle to show God's ideal of that disp. It was an effort to remove the misconception & tear off the pre-tradition. To put away the hypocrisy & ungodly sanctimoniousness. To tear off the mask from the intense selfishness underlying even the surface of its worship. And to show that it was not a disp. of form & ceremony above. But of life & love & power as well. Form & ceremony, these were to help a people to whom curious things were a help & had been a necessity. But that it was to be a form full of life, a ceremony glowing with fervor & full of power. A disp. that meant salvation to men &c. There was something more even in a historic way in the ministry of John the Baptist. There was underlying the ceremonial law, a covenant. A prom. given to Abm & accepted by him through faith & his faith was counted to him for righteousness. The prom. was to him & his seed. Which seed was Christ. Gods covenant was begun in faith & was to have its large results in faith &c. The ceremonial law was not a part of this Cov. Abrm. Isaac - Jacob kept the Cov. When Moses was sent to lead the people out &c. They transgressed. They had only started from their first camping ground beyond the Red Sea - until their demoralized condition broke out through unbelief & cried out. "Would God we had died" &c. The Lord dealt very gently & mercifully with them. But seems at once to have begun the arrangement for a ceremonial education. To bring them back where pure faith could be taught them & they rec. & live by it. The first thing he did. He set their Sabbath back a day to make them a peculiar, a marked &c. Then came all of that marvelous system of laws, of works, of sacred & profane things, of clean & unclean things. Of multiplied sacrifices & offerings &c &c. All of which would of never been if they had been wholly to &c. (Galatians 3-19) But the broader Cov. of faith which was to lead to Jesus Christ the seed of Abm. was back [if] & underneath & about all of this ceremonial &c. - Now John the Baptist stood for this Cov. of faith in God. And while he rep. the Cerem. he was as one who looked through it all. As one looks through a thin mist & sees the sunshine beyond. As one who is loyal to & yet emerging from. As one who looks upon a pretense & turns away to look upon the reality. John stood for the Cov. of faith which reached from Abrm to Jesus. The whole Cov. was one long gaze forward to Jesus. John was the embodiment of that gaze. Looking until he cried Behold the Lamb of God &c. He not only stands for this Cov. of faith in history. But he stands for the first Cov. of grace in Christian experience. He truly bap. with water. His ministry was a cry in the wilderness to bring them to God. His cry was not an empty voice. It was the cry of the kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. It was the cry of the coming of the King. Prepare ye the way of the Lord &c. It culminated in his own vis. of the Lord & pointing others to him. He made known to men salvation by the remission of sins. Jesus not only recognizes his place in history as a Prophet &c. But his relation in his ministry to his own. John's baptism represented a purification, a changed, a purified life. It represented repentance. Faith in God. Forgiveness of sins. A pure life. This is the first Cov. of grace in Jesus Christ.

There is a tremendous amount of salvation in the baptism of John. It means that a man knows his sins are forgiven. And that he lives a holy life. A sanctified man does not live any more free from sinning than any converted man. Sin is of the devil & when we commit sin we are the child of the devil. "He that is born of God" &c. John. When we preach conversion. People accuse us of preaching entire sanctification. Conversion is a high grace. It is a translation &c. John truly bap-with water &c. But now I am about to enter on my work & ministry. My peculiar ministry. My bap. Now I wish to note. That the ministry of our ascended Lord is something more than getting people converted. John says. "I indeed bap" &c. I preach repentance. I lead men & women into salvation so that they have a knowledge of sins forgiven. The Cov. which he represented of faith in God & of a Savior to come. A prom. seed. Had for its inheritance. The forgiveness of sins. Is. said "come & let us reason" as literally, quiet your reasoning &c. The prophets all the way urge men to get rid of their sins &c – Culminating in this [representation] man. Whose preaching swept through the nation like [cyclone] calling men to repentance and the forgiveness of sins. Now he prophecies of Jesus Christ something further, something else. My ministry he says is represented by water purification. This other. This further ministry is represented by fire. Both of these are cleansing agencies. There is much that water can wash away. It can make a garment clean. It can make the outside of a person &c. It is a [gr] purifying agency. John's bap. was not Ch. Bap. It was a Jewish type of purification. It told of what salvation through the forgiveness of sins could do. If a man is converted it washes his outside life. He quits his sinning. He turns face about &c. His past sins are forgiven him. A new life. A new love is put into him. He loves God – [good] people – hates sin &c. A man says. Is not that enough. No nothing is enough this side of what God has provided. &c - J.B. & his disciples had all that. It was a part of the covenant inheritance of the first Cov. J.B. clearly indicates that Jesus C was going to do something more. The emblem of the purification of Jesus is fire. There is a purification that water cannot reach that nothing but fire can do. I once was engaged in [ministry]. I was [pres.] of a com – that invested about 1/2 mil. dollars in a [yr] min. The [-] sent me a piece of ore. A fine piece. Very clean &c &c. We had it assayed, rich in silver &c. But he said in it was every bad thing, antimony & sulphur &c. We were anxious to find some cheap method &c. But nothing but fire would take out the base metal &c. We find in some sense that is true of the human soul. Washed with the washing of regeneration. The real gold of the love to God & man put in the soul. Yet there are still bare elements there. Sptual. antimony &c that hinder the soul's life. That prevents the growth of Spt. life. That besets the spiritual life with secular temptations. That almost inevitably entraps the soul & causes it to backslide. This base metal is recognized in the New Testament as the old man, the flesh, carnality, the old leaven &c. These are recognized after his conversion & the necessity of their being taken away. Old man is to be crucified. Carnality to be cast out. Flesh put to death &c. Of the need of this there can be no question. The new life in the soul is dominant but in a hard soil. And under the ordinary teaching of so called Christianity. There is a feeling of pity for the young convert. The bap. of Jesus completes the work of salvation. Saves from sin &c. Mal. the last of the Prophets before John the forerunner &c as he looked out & saw the coming & ministry of Jesus said "Behold I send my messenger &c. It was the sons of Levi – &c. This ref. to sons of Levi seems to mean comprehensively those set apart to the priestly office & the service of the Sanctuary. Now that whole temple service was a type of the church of God. From that holy of holies there went out the light & sanctity of the divine presence. And from that brazen altar which represented the Cross of Calvary [-] by the laver & the altar of incense & the show bread & the golden candlestick to the holy of holies. It was an approach to God. The sons of Levi represent the Church of God who come by the way of the cross. It is these that this messenger of the Cov. shall purify. The dispensation of Jesus in & through the Holy Ghost is a

dispensation of things beyond conversion. The great fact in which it rises above the dispensation before the Holy Ghost was given is largely the entire sanctification of believers. The purification which the fire brings which the water did not. Of course in connection with it there is the more abundant manifestation in awaking & conversion. But the single work that marks the coming of the H.G. is that men are sanctified wholly - &c. We have here a very clear objection. Here were assembled a company of converted men & women. Not all the converted men & women in the world. There were 500 disciples gathered at one place after the resurrection. And there were doubtless many more in the land. There were doubtless many converted people when Jesus came. The Shepherds & Simeon, Anna. These are doubtless but [-] of earnest godly souls scattered here & there. The great revival under John the Baptist doubtless brought many to a knowledge of salvation. Jesus own preaching & his disciples. But here was a little company of 120 to whose attention the prom of the father had been especially called. And being very near to Jesus had heard him say that the prom should be speedily fulfilled. And waited in prayer and supplication & expectancy until in the unity of the spirit & faith they received. Their hearts were purified. The old leaven was removed &c. Christ was revealed to them & in them. The word of the Lord glowed with a depth & breadth of meaning never dreamed of before. It is just the same today. There is clear calling attention to the promise &c. Prayer & supplication & expectancy. The rushing wind and fire. &c

End of notes