

Understanding Baptism Part 5

October 7, 2020

Resources on Baptism

1. *Down in the River to Pray* by John Mark Hicks and Greg Taylor
2. *Baptism: What the Bible Teaches* (free eBook on renew.org)
3. A Student's Guide to Baptism (free study guide on TeachOneReachOne.org).
4. Free Bible Study put together by Bryan

Recap:

Old Testament Stories: The waters of Creation, the Flood, the Red Sea, the Jordan River.

Spiritual Anchors: Big ideas, passages, or assumptions that serve as a non-negotiable starting point for understanding our faith.

The Baptism of Jesus: Four ways of understanding the story: Trinity, Sacrament, Story, Example.

The Nine Baptisms in Acts: Illustrating the expansion of God's Kingdom to every people of the earth.

Tonight's Class:

How do the New Testament letters help us understand the gifts we receive in baptism?

Passages on Baptism:

- Romans 6:1-4
- 1 Corinthians 12:12-14
- Ephesians 4:3-6
- 1 Corinthians 1:10-17
- Colossians. 2:9-15
- 1 Peter 3:19-22
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
- Galatians 3:26-29
- Titus 3:5-8

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***The Main Idea:** Baptism is a spiritual death and rebirth that God uses to bring about concrete changes in the life of a believer.*

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How Does Baptism Change Us?

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"Baptism for Paul is an apocalyptic sign of a seismic shift from an old identity, ethic, and world view to a radically new identity in Christ, an ethic of life in the Spirit, and a restored and hope-filled world view. Baptism is the objective sign that the old world has passed away and everything has become new in the life of the believer."

Hicks & Taylor, *Down in the River to Pray*

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Four Big Themes

1. **Unity**—Baptism brings a diverse church together.
2. **Death and Rebirth**—We participate in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.
3. **Transformation**—We are a new creation.
4. **Forgiveness**—We are washed clean.

1. Baptism & Unity

In several passages, Paul briefly mentions baptism, but the real focus is on the unity of the church. Baptism is one more reason why we should all be united together.

Ephesians 4:3-6, *“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”*

1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 12-14

*4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same **Spirit** distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same **Lord**. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same **God** at work. 12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 **For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body**—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.*

Galatians 3:26-28

*“So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, **for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**”*

The church in Corinth had major issues with factions and divisions, and Paul was frustrated that the person performing the baptism became one more source of that fighting.

1 Corinthians 1:10-15

*“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and **that there be no divisions among you**, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ. 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 **so no one can say that you were baptized in my name.**”*

Remember: The nine baptism stories illustrate how all people from all nations are being brought together into the Kingdom of God. Baptism is a sign of God’s expanding Kingdom, so Paul’s appeal to baptism as a source of our unity makes sense.

2. Death, Burial and Resurrection

Paul uses the language of **death, burial and resurrection** to describe our experience in baptism.

Romans 6:1-4

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

New Testament scholar and Bishop **N.T. Wright** writes this about Paul's line of thinking in Romans 6:

"In becoming a Christian you die and rise again with the Messiah. Here we meet, for the first time in Romans, one of Paul's central beliefs: that since the Messiah represents his people, what is true of him is true of them. More particularly, the act of baptism, which as far as Paul was concerned was the practical and physical beginning of Christian life, involves the Christian dying and rising with the Messiah."

N.T. Wright, Paul for Everyone, Romans Part I, 101

Colossians 2:11-14

*"11 In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, 12 having been **buried with him in baptism**, in which you were also **raised with him** through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 When you were **dead in your sins** and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you **alive with Christ**. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross."*

Titus 3:5-7

*"He saved us through the washing of **rebirth** and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."*

Baptism Is a Spiritual Rebirth:

Death to our old identity, and the birth of our new identity in Jesus.

Our Resurrection in Baptism brings About a New Identity.

Galatians 3:26-27

*"So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have **clothed yourselves with Christ**."*

2 Corinthians 5:17

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the **new creation** has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"*

Clothing sends a message about our values, opinions, and priorities.

- Political statements / Sports teams / Movies / Music

Clothed with Christ is an alternative to being clothed with the ideas, customs and values of our world.

3. Transformed Life

Our baptism represents an irreversible shift in our thoughts, actions, and attitudes. A new creation, we don't revive our old way of living.

Romans 6:1-2

*"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! **We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"***

We can't keep on sinning the way we did before we came to faith. Our baptism ushered in a new ethic.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

*9 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were. **But you were washed**, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

Note: "Washed" is a word the Bible uses to describe baptism, as in **Acts 22:16**.

Paul personally experienced a profound moral change through the power of Jesus. Writing to the Corinthian church, he reminds them that many Christians were immoral before meeting Jesus, but they were washed and made new by Jesus.

The Orthodox Church highlights the importance of a transformed life in their teachings:

*"The universal meaning of baptism is that of 'starting anew,' of dying to an old, way of life and being born again into a new way of life. Thus, baptism was always connected with repentance which means a moral conversion, a 'change of mind,' **a change in living from something old and bad to something new and good**. It becomes very specifically the act of a person's death and resurrection in and with Jesus. Christian baptism is man's participation in the event of Easter." Orthodox Church in America • OCA.org*

4. Forgiveness

When Paul was baptized, a disciple of Jesus names Ananias explained to him what was happening and what his baptism represented. Paul's understanding of the grace we receive in baptism is no doubt shaped by **his own baptism experience**.

Acts 22:14-16

*14 "Then [Ananias] said: 'The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. 15 You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now what are you waiting for? **Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.**'"*

Peter also understood that our baptism was connected to God's work of salvation:

1 Peter 3:20-22

In [Noah's Ark] only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, 21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the

pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

5. Summary

The Orthodox, Catholic, and some Protestant churches largely agree about the major themes associated with baptism in the New Testament letters. The Orthodox view is shared above (middle of page 4).

What Do Different Churches Teach?

Catholic Church: “Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the neophyte ‘a new creature,’ an adopted son of God, who has become a ‘partaker of the divine nature,’ member of Christ and co-heir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit.” CCC 1265

Lutheran Church “Baptism effects forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, just as the words and promises of God declare. Such baptizing with water means that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts; and that a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.” *Luther's Small Catechism*

Protestant Churches with a lower view of baptism would likely agree with these themes being associated with baptism, but would argue that baptism symbolizes these changes (that have already occurred) rather than bringing them about in a tangible way.

The Gift of Baptism from the New Testament Letters:

1. **Romans 6**— Death to sin; New life in Christ.
2. **Colossians 2**— Raised to new life; made alive with Christ; sins forgiven.
3. **Ephesians 4**— Unity with the church.
4. **1 Corinthians 12**— United as one body of believers, baptized by Spirit.
5. **Galatians 3**— Child of God, clothed with Christ, no more divisions.
6. **1 Corinthians 6**— Washed, sanctified, justified by Jesus & Spirit.
7. **1 Peter 3**— Pledge of a clear conscience, salvation.
8. **Titus 3**— Salvation, washed, rebirth, renewal through the Spirit.