

# Water Baptism

## Our Betrothal to the Bridegroom

*"Do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?" Romans 6:3*

When Jesus Christ gave His Great Commission, He commanded all new disciples to be water baptized. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19)." Water baptism outwardly expresses the divine transformation that occurred in a believer when they were born again of the Spirit. Through baptism, new believers declare their union with Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection. Thus water baptism is the betrothal or commitment ceremony of new members of the bride of Christ to Jesus, their Bridegroom. Our actual marriage ceremony to the Lamb of God will take place at the end of this age. Whenever anyone was saved in the early church, they were normally water baptized the same day. This was God's way for new disciples to be taught that their old sinful nature had died and they were now a new creation in Christ. Knowing you have died with Christ is crucial if you want to become Christ's disciple and overcoming bride. This is the spiritual lesson that God wants every Christian to learn from water baptism.

The Greek word for baptize is *baptizo*, which means to immerse. When you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, the Bible says you are spiritually immersed into Christ's death so that you might have His new resurrection life (Romans 6:3-5). Therefore, in water baptism, there are two stages that express this truth of the gospel. First there is a burial and then there is a resurrection. Whenever anyone was baptized in the early church, they were immersed under water, which represented the burial of their old man. "We have been buried with Him through baptism into death (Romans 6:4; see also Colossians 2:12)." This burial in water baptism confirms that when we were born again, our old

sin nature died. Burial also signifies that God has removed that old man of sin from us. Therefore, our sinful nature not only died; it can never come back to haunt us since God has taken it away. "For we know our old man was crucified with Him in order that our sinful nature might be done away with so that we would no longer be slaves to sin (Romans 6:6)."

In this way, water baptism reveals the heart of the New Covenant. God knew we needed forgiveness for our sins; He also knew we needed deliverance from our sin nature. Otherwise, we would remain captives to sin. Therefore, when Jesus Christ died, He bore not only our sins on the cross; He also bore our sin nature on the cross with Him. "God made Christ who had no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21)." Since our bondage to sin came when we were born sinners; our deliverance from sin came when God included us in Christ's death. "We are convinced that one died for all, therefore all died (2 Corinthians 5:14)." "Because anyone who has died has been freed from sin (Romans 6:7)."

In the next phase of water baptism, we are raised in new resurrection life out of the watery grave. This demonstrates that Jesus Christ now lives in us (2 Corinthians 13:5; Romans 6:4-5). But we must always remember our old man of sin had to be buried before we could be raised up a new man in Christ. Before God could make us a new creation, He had to first deal with the old creation. God had to take care of not only its fruit (our sins); He had to remove its very root (our sinful nature). "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17)!" Thus water baptism demonstrates how God replaced our sinful nature with His holy nature by including us in the death, burial and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. We might consider this new birth a divine heart transplant by which God exchanged our terminally sin-sick heart with His Son's divine heart to save us from the power of sin and certain doom.

This divine exchange is not a future promise reserved for us when we go to heaven; it is God's present reality that He wants us to experience now if we will receive it by faith. The intent of Christ's crucifixion was to produce this total transformation within our inner being so we would no longer be defeated by sin but live daily in Christ's resurrection power. Since water baptism is for new disciples, we can mistakenly think teaching on water baptism is elementary and not for older Christians. However, we cannot grow into Christian maturity unless we abide by faith in God's truth that we have died with Christ and Christ is now our life (Colossians 3:3-4). In fact, God knows it is impossible for us to live the Christian life and follow Christ in truly devoted discipleship if we don't know our old sinful nature is dead and gone.

Therefore, we cannot realize we are dead to sin (Romans 6:11), if we do not truly know we were crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6). This is the way faith works. The Bible says Jesus Christ died for the whole world but if you do not know He died for you, you cannot be saved. In the same way, the Bible says Christians have been freed from sin but if you do not know you have died with Christ, you cannot overcome sin. This is why instruction on the spiritual meaning of water baptism is so essential. Each time God adds new believers to the church, they act out through baptism their inclusion in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. In this way, water baptism always reminds the church of this great provision of Jesus Christ's death on the cross.

*"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God." Galatians 2:20*

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