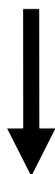


**TO  
REMOVE  
SIN**



Apply  
Christ's  
Sacrificed  
Blood

# Introduction

Sin has separated man from God, the Father, God, the Son and God the Holy Spirit. We know from Romans that all mankind are sinners and that no one can return to a righteous relationship with God except through Jesus for He is the way the truth and the life.

God is very patient with man as He wants everyone to turn to Him and not perish. The blood sacrifices of bulls and goats cannot remove sin. It requires the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus of Nazareth.

“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!” (Romans 5:6-10)

The BibleWay lesson Baptized into Christ will provide much detail information on the subject of baptism.

The removal of one's sin by the Blood of Christ is discussed in the following four lessons:

What Does Washed in the Blood Mean?

Starting Life All Over

How Is The Blood Applied?

The Beginning of the Pilgrimage

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## What Does Washed in the Blood Mean?

John came preaching a baptism unto repentance. He baptized Jesus in the Jordan River to fulfill all righteousness. After Jesus had poured out His Spirit on Pentecost, Peter stated that those guilty of sin, i.e. crucifying Jesus, should repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Some 3,000 were convicted, repented and baptized, to be forgiven of their sins. Many examples of individual baptisms are recorded in Acts. So, what does baptism mean? Why were they told to do that? Why did Christ command it? What does it signify? How important is it? These are the things to be examined in this study.

Generally everyone brings to a Bible study things they have previously heard. We all come to the table with some kind of preconceived notion in almost any study including the study of baptism. There appear to be two extremes views on baptism.

1. Baptism is important, but it's not necessary. There are a lot of good people who don't question the necessity of belief. They don't question the necessity of repentance. But they question the role of baptism as being necessary for becoming a Christian. Their concern appears to be in conflict with the Biblical doctrine that, "one is saved by faith and not by good works" (Ephesians 2:8-9) and a host of other scriptures.
2. Baptism is necessary because faith is not enough. This group obviously disagrees with the first. They relate to the many New Testament passages that link baptism to a saving moment, to the washing away of sins. So, many folks come to the conclusion that God did his part in salvation and now it's up to man to finish the process by doing his part. These folks tend to talk about salvation as a matter of steps, and early in that step process is belief and somewhere near the end is baptism.

Both of those groups are trying to stress something important. But both those notions as just described are wrong. The important thing is not what our preconceived notion is but what does the Bible say, nothing more, and nothing less. So, what does the Bible has to say?

1. Matthew 28:19-20 — Jesus gives what some call today the great commission. He said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Notice that this *making disciples of all nations* is part of Jesus'

final marching orders. He says that baptizing is an integral part of the making disciples process. Jesus said, "Here is what I want you to do. I want you to preach the gospel. I want you to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Then teach them to live as disciples."

Notice that baptism is separated from the good works that Christians are to be taught to do. In other words, baptism is different from good works. The phrase, *in the name of*, which is used *in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit*, was not an ancient Greek religious term. No, it came from the Banking and Commerce Industry. It was used to refer to taking something out of one account and putting it into another. When you're baptized *into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit* you are, in essence, being transferred into a new ownership relationship with God. In other words you come under new management. So baptism is an indispensable part of what it means to make one a disciple of Jesus.

2. Mark 16:15-16 — A similar kind of command is recorded by a different author. Jesus said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes in me and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." Notice here the connection between faith and baptism. Read it carefully. You couldn't conclude from that passage that baptism is more important than believing or less important either. In fact, the way the sentence is constructed lets you see that the epoxy of baptism presupposes faith. Baptism is powerless if it is not of one who believes. In fact, the negative clause in the sentence shows that, if you don't believe, you're not even going to be baptized, so baptism is not even mentioned. There is no idea in this passage that baptism is a step you add to faith. The idea instead is that baptism is an expression of your faith. You're either going to do both; you're either going to believe and be baptized, or you'll do neither. The idea is foreign to the New Testament that you would do one without the other. In fact, nowhere in the New Testament can you ever find a believer who was not baptized.
3. John 3:3-5 — Look at Jesus and Nicodemus. "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." One of the important points is that baptism is always associated with the work and coming of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was baptized in Matthew 3, the Holy Spirit descended as a dove. Here we see Jesus saying that you need to be

*born of water and the Spirit.* Peter said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38) The Spirit and baptism are always connected. In the above John 3 passage, Jesus tells us that he came to renew us from the inside out. Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

4. Acts 2:38 — Peter preaching to the Jews on Pentecost said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." It says baptism is where the water and the Spirit meet. We need to be cured of the guilt of sin, and the power of sin. In baptism you receive the washing, but you also receive the Holy Spirit to give you the power to turn your life in a new direction and to overcome the temptation of sin in the future.

A lot of people have trouble with baptism being in any way connected to the forgiveness of sin, for they fear that it somehow teaches that man saves himself. Look at this verse again. "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin." This passage clearly connects baptism to the forgiveness of sin. It does not say repent and be baptized because your sins have been forgiven." Baptism is something you do because you are forgiven. Notice:

- a. The same Greek word structure is used in this verse is also used by Jesus in Matthew 26 as He is instituting the Lord's Supper. He says about the cup, "This cup is my blood which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Exact same sentence structure. Few people, if any, believe that Jesus' blood was poured out because our sins had already been forgiven.
  - b. Does one repent because his sins are forgiven? No! No, turning from sin is what we do to seek forgiveness.
  - c. The Jews, who heard this first sermon, were cut to the heart when Peter persuaded them, "You've slain the Messiah! In anguish they asked what they could do about the guilt of their sin. The answer was and still is repent and be baptized! That's what you can do." Two of the many promises connected with baptism in the Bible are:
    - i. the cleansing of sin
    - ii. the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.
5. Romans 6:3-4 — Paul says, "For don't you know that all of us who are baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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".

The Greek word translated as baptized, means to immerse, to dunk, to dip and to plunge. Whenever someone is baptized they are physically submerged into the water, (buried) and pulled out (resurrected). One could say, "Why?" They are reliving the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul doesn't say, "You believed into the death of Jesus." He doesn't say, "You repented into the death of Jesus." No! The language is clear isn't it? He said, "You were baptized into his death." That's important because it's by the death of Jesus that his saving work happened.

Baptism is not a symbol of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection it is the *participation* in his death, burial and resurrection because that's where sin was taken away! Now don't misunderstand. The Bible does not teach that water takes away sin. No! **The blood of Jesus is the only cleansing agent that can wash away a single sin.** In our expression of our faith we come in contact with that saving blood which culminates in our baptism into His death following our death to sin. We died, were buried in water baptism into his death, resurrected or raised by God and given a new life and the Holy Spirit.

6. 1 Corinthians 1:13-15 — "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? I'm thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, no one can say that you were baptized into my name." Somebody may say, "See there, Paul says he's happy he didn't baptize anybody. Baptism isn't important". *Whoa!* Paul is saying the exact opposite. Paul isn't denouncing baptism there, what he is denouncing, in its purist form, is division among Christians (Christians who divide themselves into separate groups and refer to themselves by different names). Paul says, 'I'm condemning the religious practice of following a man instead of following Christ'. The problem as stated in verse 12 is "Some of you are saying, "I'm of Cephas", some of you are saying, "I'm of Apollos", some of you are saying, "I'm of Paul"." But listen, his whole argument supports the importance of baptism. In the early Church, baptism was so important that some people began to have the administrator of their baptism become the object of a special allegiance, rivaling even the worship of Christ and causing factions in the Church. What Paul is saying is, "Who baptized you is not important. Why you were baptized is important. You were baptized into the one who was crucified for you. You became a disciple of Jesus Christ, not a disciple of the person

who baptized you."

7. 1 Corinthians 12:13 — "For we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body-whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free." A phrase often heard in religious circles, but you never find it anywhere in the Bible, is the phrase *joining the Church*. Have you joined the Church? Biblically, you don't join a Church because some people give you permission to do it. According to Acts 2:41, after the 3,000 were baptized on Pentecost day, God added them to the Apostles, His Body or His Church. As stated above you are baptized into Christ, your baptism put you into the Body. You see, Biblically you're added to GOD's CHURCH by your birth and God himself does the adding.
8. Galatians 3:26-27 — "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves [something you do] with Christ." Look at that ending again. Paul doesn't say, "All of you who were clothed with Christ had been baptized". Notice he connects baptism with the moment that you became one with Christ. I find that particularly interesting because Galatians 3 vigorously opposes a salvation by works attitude. He denounces that all the way through Galatians 3, and yet in verse 27 Paul states, "all of you who believed were baptized into Christ and you were clothed with him." "Every good blessing in the Bible comes to those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1) "For there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 4:14) "When Christ comes again all those who have fallen asleep in Christ are going to come out of their graves and meet him in the air. Every good blessing in the Bible comes to those who are in Christ Jesus. Baptism places you in Christ.
9. Ephesians 4:4-6 — "There is one body and one Spirit-just as you were called to one hope when you were called-one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all." It breaks God's heart at the disunity among those who believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God and who believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God. There are millions and millions of people who believe what I've just described, and yet they're fragmented all around the world. Paul listed seven corner-stones of unity. Notice the august company baptism keeps - One faith, one Lord, one God, one Spirit, one hope, one baptism. How presumptive man is to assert that baptism is of little or no importance at all.
10. Titus 3:5 — "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had

done, but because of his mercy. He saved us by the washing of rebirth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit." Baptism is that washing of rebirth. Hear me people. Paul states that it is "not because of works, but by the washing of rebirth." Baptism is not a part of a works system that we can do to earn forgiveness! Search your Bible. You'll never, ever see baptism referred to as a work! Following ones submission to His will and trust in His promises by dying to sin, God chose to have someone bury you, passive on your part, so He could resurrect you a new living spiritual creation. Therefore, baptism is not a works system, but a faith system. It's not something (a work) you do. It's something, (a work) God does to you.

11. 1 Peter 3:21 — Peter has just stated how Noah and his family were saved in the ark from the flood. "And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also-not removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God." Notice Peter states, "Look folks, it's not the water. I mean all water can do is just clean dirt off your body. Rather, it's what it expresses. It's an appeal of your heart, of your conscience, for the cleansing of Jesus". That's why Christians are not to boast in their baptism, but in the power and the blood of Jesus Christ.

### **Summarized by four key points.**

1. Baptism initiates newness. It defies humanism who says, "Awe, we're all okay. We just need to educate ourselves out of a few flaws." No! Baptism says humankind is deeply and mortally flawed by sin. We don't need correction - we need re-creation which begins with the new birth. Something radical, something profound happens at our baptism. Have you ever noticed the metaphors in the Bible relating to baptism are powerful and primal? God uses words like birth, death, burial and resurrection. God does something profound at baptism.
2. Baptism is a God ordained expression of faith. God has always ordained the faith expression he wanted, not what you and I think is reasonable. All the way through the Bible God has asked for faith expressions that seem bizarre. For example:
  - a. Telling the Israelites to look up at the bronze serpent on top of the pole to cure them from the bite of a poisonous snake. How many of those Israelites would say, "I was cured because I had a great glare." No! They were cured by the grace of God following their trust and obedience in Him. Not doubt some did not accept this rather silly faith expression, refused to look and died. Not the work of looking upon the serpent but by obedience to God.

- b. Requiring the Children of Israel to march around the wall of Jericho. God said, 'Here's how you're going to get that wall to fall. March around it once a day for six days and seven times on the seventh day'. The wall didn't fall because of their cadence, the wall fell because they responded by putting their trust and obedience in a faith response to what God mandated.
- c. Naaman, the commander of the army in Syria, came down with his leprosy. Elisha sent word to Naaman to "go in the Jordan River and dip seven times." Naaman was so puffy and proud he was about to go home the leper he came until he was persuaded to go in the Jordan River. When he came up that seventh time, he was cleansed. Because that was the faith response that God mandated. The water did not cleanse Naaman but obedience.

Martin Luther, the great reformer, was known for his emphasis on faith over works. In fact, Martin Luther even had questions about whether the book of James should to be included in the Bible because he thought it was so works oriented. Martin Luther believed in baptism as the faith response to wash away sins. Some of his peers chided him saying, "doesn't that go against your faith in works theology?" Martin Luther said this, "It is true that our works are of no use for salvation. But, baptism is not our work, it's God's". He's right. It is the faith expression ordained by God.

- 3. Baptism is a call to unity. There is one baptism and through it we are baptized into one body and one Lord. We are one in Christ Jesus, neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, nor male or female. It's so tragic that something God designed to unify the Church has been used by the Devil through the centuries to bring division.

4.

- 4. Baptism is a statement of allegiance. It's a pledge of allegiance. In the first Thessalonian letter Paul talks about obeying the gospel. You do that when you put your faith and trust in Christ are baptized into Christ based upon your faith. But, don't ever get the idea that once you've done it. That's it. It's over. It's all done." Baptism is not the end, it's the beginning! It's the beginning of a journey with Jesus at the helm taking you all the way to your heavenly home. You're saying by your baptism, "I'm committed to the cause of Christ."

One may not always be faithful to Jesus every hour of every day. But God has always been faithful. He's never once slipped an inch on his promise.

He's with me because I'm in him. I am clothed with Christ because I was buried into his death, burial and resurrection. (Amazing Grace Lesson #1318, Steve Flatt, June 8, 1997)

### **Starting Life All Over**

Wouldn't it be great if you could start life over and just do the years again? I wish life was that simple. Can life be a do over? It's a great question. It's an important question. It's an old question. In fact, the first time I know of it being asked was over two thousand years ago by a man named Nicodemus. "Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, 'Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.'" (John 3:1-2)

Nicodemus was an interesting and admirable man, for he had all the things that so many of us think that we need in order for life to make sense. He had power. He was a member of the ruling Jewish body called the Sanhedrin, an illustrious group of 70 men who had jurisdiction over every Jew in the world. But a powerful life is not necessarily a purposeful life. Sir Leonard Wolfe served in the British Parliament for 57 years, he wrote in the introductory statement of his autobiography, "I see clearly that I have achieved practically nothing. The world today in the history of the human anthill during the past 57 years would be exactly the same as it would have been if I had played ping pong instead of sitting on committees and writing books and memoranda. I have, therefore, to make the rather ignominious confession to myself and anyone who might read this book that I have in a long life ground through between 150 and 200,000 hours of perfectly useless work."

Does a powerful life mean a purposeful life? Not necessarily. But Nicodemus had more. He had an education. An education at the feet of the very finest rabbis in the land was a prerequisite for serving on the Jewish Sanhedrin. But a wall full of diplomas will not guarantee a sense of direction.

David Levy graduated as the valedictorian of his Dartmouth College class. In his remarks to his graduating class, David said, "I have thought of suicide, but been unwilling to commit it. I have rejected graduate school offers because I could not worship black ink. I have made no plans because I have found no plans worth making. Clearly then I am a mad person in a

sane world. Take pity on me those of you who can justify the air you breathe. Send me letters and tell me why life is worth living. Tell me what meaning there is in life." Now there was a man with an education, but it lacked in its curriculum any sense of purpose. An educated man is not necessarily a purpose driven man.

But Nicodemus still had more. He had fame. Jesus said of him, "You are Israel's teacher." (John 3:10) Apparently, he was renowned as a scholar among scholars. In a land that exalted Bible teachers, this man was a household name in Jerusalem and beyond. But you can have a lot of fans and still precious little peace. I've always liked what Walt Disney wrote many years ago when he was asked what it was like to be a celebrity. Walt Disney said, "I don't mind being a celebrity if it helps get me a choice seat at a football game." But he said, "As far as I can remember, being a celebrity has never helped me make a good picture, it has never commanded the obedience of my daughter, and it has not impressed my wife. In fact, being a celebrity doesn't even keep the fleas off our dog. And if being a celebrity won't give me an advantage over a couple of fleas, then I guess there's not all that much to it."

No, fame is not what life is all about. But wait a minute. Nicodemus had the big one. He had money! Show me the money! He had plenty of it. We're not told that in John 3, but in John 19 we read that Nicodemus was the one who along with Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus' body and buried it. When he did, he anointed it with 75 pounds of spices. That was much more than the common man could afford. In fact, that amount would have been reserved for kings. Nicodemus had a lot of money. But you can have a lot of money but and not a lot of meaning.

Joe DiMaggio said on the occasion of Marilyn Monroe's suicide, "Marilyn had everything to live with, and nothing to live for." The trouble with money is, if anything, it only magnifies the temptation for selfishness. Hollywood says, if you take those four things we've just discussed more power, education, fame, and money, life will work. Oh, and just in case it doesn't, there is one more thing you can try, and that's religion. If those things don't work, try some religion and life will make sense. Nicodemus had that, too. Verse 1 says he was a Pharisee. That means he was a member of an elite group who segregated themselves from normal life, devoted themselves to the minutest details of religious observance. Nicodemus didn't just have religion, he was religion. It was his passion, it was his life. Nicodemus had maxed out on all the criteria that we use for a purposeful life. The question is. Why did this man who had everything come to Jesus at night, a man who had nothing? The answer is, because all those things

Nicodemus had were externals. They really don't have a single thing to do with being alive. Nicodemus knew something was still missing.

"In reply Jesus declared, 'I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.'" (John 3:3) Do you see what Nicodemus needed? Nicodemus needed a new life. By having as much as he did and still coming to Jesus, Nicodemus admitted what so many of us don't want to believe. He admitted that we're not a collection of cells that crawled up out of the slime and evolved over a trillion years, but we are spiritual beings. C.S. Lewis said, "Most of us have the wrong picture. We think of ourselves as human beings with a spiritual dimension, when in fact we are spiritual beings who are simply passing through the human experience." He's right, and that's exactly what the Bible teaches. The real you is on the inside. The real you is just borrowing a tent. The real you is spiritual and eternal in nature, and until you satisfy the needs of the real you, you will be an empty person. So Nicodemus has all these external things, money, fame, power, education, and even religion. Yet he stills comes to Jesus at night, and he saying by his actions, I still don't feel close to God. He thought what so many of us think. I just need more of something I already have, and I'll be fulfilled. Jesus said, "Nicodemus, you don't need more. You need new." It's not having something, it's being something. You must be born again.

Look at Nicodemus' question asked in verse 4. "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Now look closely. Nicodemus isn't questioning the desirability of the thought. He's questioning the possibility of the thought. He says, "Jesus, that sounds great. I'd love a fresh start. I wish I could be born again." But life isn't a do over, is it?

Jesus emphasizes that new life requires new birth. It has to be. "Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.'" Jesus said, Nicodemus needed a new life, but in order to have it, he must have new birth. Because the real you, the spiritual, eternal you needs to come alive and spiritual birth must precede spiritual life. "Flesh gives birth to flesh, and the Spirit gives birth to spirit." People, the quest for meaning, the quest for fulfillment, will never take place, I don't care what Hollywood says, I don't care what Wall Street says, and I don't care what Washington says, the quest for meaning will never

be satisfied by searching for more. What we need is new life. Externals can never provide it, but Jesus Christ can. That's why Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" We need new life, and to get there, we need a new birth.

What then are the implications of this new birth?

1. The new birth is essential, not optional. If we want to be right with God, if we want our real being, our spiritual being, fulfilled, Jesus said you cannot enter His presence, you cannot enter His kingdom, unless you are born again. He's not saying it's unlikely. He's saying it's impossible. Read it very carefully. If you are not in God's kingdom, there is only one other possibility. You are in the kingdom of darkness over which Satan is the ruler, and he doesn't give furloughs. The only way that you can be in God's kingdom is to be born into it and made a citizen of it. That, by the way, is why I believe the phrase "born again Christian" is redundant. There's no other kind of Christian. If you're a Christian, you have to be born again. There's no other option. The new birth is essential, it is not optional.
2. The new birth is internal, not external. Externals, even including religion, can only deal with symptoms. The externals will polish and buff and shine. But they can't make things new. That's what must be done. Applying money, fame, power and education will not give one a new life. That would be like going to a doctor who after reading your x-ray said "I've have some terrible news. You have a tumor in the middle of your lung, but don't worry. I have a brand new chemical. I can just brush it on your x-ray and remove all signs of your tumor." You know the tumor is still there. It's still going to eat your life away. Unless you go in there and take it out and cure it. In the same way, the reason that we feel so unfulfilled in life is that we've have this spiritual cancer on the inside, it's called sin and the only way to cure it is to take it out, to cure it, to cleanse it with a powerful force on the inside.

God prophesied this through the prophet Ezekiel years before. "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws." (Ezekiel 36:25) The Bible says that only God's Spirit can deal with the needs of your spirit. In our text with Jesus and Nicodemus, we see this prophecy coming to pass. Jesus said, "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to the spirit." The new birth is internal, it's not external.

3. The new birth is a gift, not an accomplishment. How much did you have to do with your first birth, with your physical birth? Not very much. You were there, you cooperated, but to tell you the truth, you didn't even really know what was going on. Well, similarly, you don't have anything to do with the power and the ingenuity of the second birth. It is a gift from God. It's a work of God, not of man. See, the reason all the other approaches we've looked at don't work is they are performance oriented. "If I had more of this. If I worked harder on that." All those things say that meaning in life is performance oriented. All those things are just doomed to frustrate us. Jesus said the life that you really want doesn't come by measuring up to somebody's artificial standard. The life that you want comes from my power. You can't get it any other way. Paul writes, "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:5) That washing of rebirth and renewal is a gift, it's not an accomplishment. He saved us by His mercy.
  
4. The new birth is evidenced but not fully understood. When a man is born again, he looks the same on the outside, and so one might say, "How can I know he's been born again? How do I know he's experienced the new birth?" Consider the example of the wind. "How does one know that the wind blows? You don't see the wind, do you? But you can hear it, you feel its effects, and know it blows." Jesus said the spirit is like the wind. Incidentally, I don't understand wind. I don't understand where it comes from. I don't understand where it goes. Oh, I know I heard in science it's caused by the unequal hitting of the earth's atmosphere. But I don't understand that. I don't know when it stops what happens to it. I'll freely admit my ignorance. In like manner, I don't fully understand spiritual birth. I don't understand how God takes away my sin when I'm born again. I don't understand how He puts His Spirit in me. I don't understand how His Spirit coexists with mine. I can't capsuleize that in a formula. But just like I've seen the effects of the wind, I've seen enough people made brand new to know it's real.

I love the story of the man who became a Christian. Before he became a Christian, he was well known as a drunkard. He was such a lush that he didn't provide even the basic necessities for his family. But when he obeyed the Gospel and became a Christian, he went to work and some of his co-workers chided him. They said, "I don't believe you became a Christian! Do you believe all those stories in the Bible?" He was so new in Christ, he didn't know very many of the stories in the Bible. He said, "What do you mean?" They said, "Well, for example, do you

believe that business about Jesus turning the water into wine?" He thought a minute and he said, "Well, to tell you the truth, I don't know if He turned the water into wine. But I know at my house He's turning beer into furniture." A lot of you understand that. We see the effect. The metaphysics of the new birth may not be fully understood, but the evidence is irrefutable.

Paul stated in Titus the very thing we're talking about. "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:3-5) You may not fully understand all the ramifications and the metaphysics of the new birth, but you can see the results of a new life.

If you could have asked those early Christians, when does all that happen? When is that washing of rebirth? When does the renewal by the Holy Spirit take place? When is that birth of water and the Spirit? They would say, "When I was baptized into Christ." Do you remember the day the church first began in Acts 2 and Peter stood up speaking on behalf of the apostles and really indicted the crowd? He said, "You crucified the one who was both Lord and Christ." Indicting them of their sin, they began to be cut to the quick, and they asked, "brothers, what should we do?" In Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Folks, that's what we need, the forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit that gives the new life, gives the internal not the external. It occurs when we repent and are baptized into Christ.

Here's the point. A new life requires new birth, and baptism is the birthing moment for a new life in Christ. The role of baptism is necessary. It is commonly misunderstood and under studied.

Many in a fervor to emphasize it have tended to miss the point. Sometimes we get so caught up in the mechanics of it. Who can do it? What must be said? What does this Greek word mean? The point is God is offering us the power of a new life to transform our lives. It's only by Christ's death on the cross that you and I have any hope of salvation. It is not a ritual. It is not a symbol. Baptism is a faith-oriented request to the crucified, risen Lord Jesus for the power of the Spirit to allow us to live a dynamically

transformed life. Paul said in Romans 6:3, "Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 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."

The question is. Can life be a do over? The answer is. If you're in Jesus Christ, every day is a do over. Every day is new. Every day is fresh. Every day is exciting when you're reborn free.

If you've been pondering this question, then have the boldness to confess the name of Jesus, turn to Him and to say I want that washing of rebirth and I want that renewal of the Holy Spirit. Not because there's magic in the water. Not because I'm doing something to earn my salvation. Start by responding in faith exactly the way God has prescribed, nothing more nothing less, the day the church was born in Acts 2. (Amazing Grace lesson #1317, Steve Flatt, June 1, 1997)

### **How is The Blood Applied?**

The first lesson in this series "What Does Washed In The Blood Mean?" explained the meaning of being washed in Christ's blood. The washing is a complete submersion by trust and obedience into Christ – his life, teachings, examples, death and resurrection. Some people do not believe that immersion, i.e. baptism, is important while others believe it is necessary because faith is not enough. However the important thing is not to allow our preconceived ideas and notions to keep us from doing nothing more or nothing less than what God desires. Please refer back to the ten scriptures quoted in lesson one to refresh your memory. They show that one must be IN Christ to receive His benefits.

"Starting Over", the second lesson, established the reality that all of us are tarnished by sin, excluded from God's presence and in need of restoration. We need to get back into a right relationship with God. The blood sacrifices of bulls and goats, required under the covenant given by God through Moses, were not sufficient for the forgiveness of sin. (Hebrews 10:4) That is why God, the Son, left His home with the Father and the Spirit to come to earth in the form of man, flesh and blood, to become the perfect sacrifice offering required for the forgiveness of man's sins.

In referring to His impending death by crucifixion Jesus stated "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. (Matthew 26:28) Acceptance of this sacrifice gives man a new

spiritual being, the Holy Spirit and a restored relationship with God. They have accepted the opportunity to start over.

Nicodemus had a difficult time with the concept of starting over, beginning anew by being born again. Like so many of us he could not focus on life beyond the present life of flesh and blood. Jesus explained the new life, the born again life, was a spiritual life, one that lives beyond the death and decay of the physical, an eternal life. This new birth/life is:

- a. essential not optional
- b. internal not external
- c. a gift not an accomplishment i.e. something earned
- d. evidenced by a changed life and not fully understood
- e. a spiritual life that begins when Christ's blood is applied not upon an awareness of one's sin or by the savior desiring to forgive man of his rebellion and sinfulness.

Some scriptures discussing Christ's blood are presented below.

Romans 3:23-25 — For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.

Ephesians 1:7-10 — In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment.

Colossians 1:19-20 — For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Him, and through Him [Christ] to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Ephesians 2:13 — But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

Hebrews 9:11-14 — When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes

of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

1 Peter 1:18-21 — For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

The cleansing blood of the perfect sacrifice became available on the day of Pentecost when Christ poured out the Spirit upon all men – “the baptism with the Holy Spirit.” “The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is what Jesus did with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost in fulfillment of the promise of the Father - Jesus poured out the Spirit on all flesh. The Spirit then became available to all saved people, independent of race (Jewish or heathen) or role in the government of God (priest, prophet, etc.)”. (The Holy Spirit thebiblewayonline.com, Joe McKinney August 2007)

### **So, how is this blood applied to mankind?**

Colossians 2:9-12 — For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

Romans 6:3-4 — Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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.

Christ's blood became available to all mankind when Christ poured out the Holy Spirit. All who by their actions accept His gift are forgiven. One does this when **he hears and understands God's message of Salvation** recognizing his sinful actions of the past. He **acknowledges or confesses** that the crucified Christ, God the Son who came to earth in human form, flesh and blood, is his savior. He **changes his current life** reflecting the

Devil to one mirroring Jesus. This is often referred to as repentance. His former life of sin dies and he calls upon God to forgive by being **buried in water baptism**. **THE BLOOD HAS NOW BEEN APPLIED**. **God resurrects** him from the grave of baptism into a new spiritual being free from past sins, places him into His kingdom (also called the Body of Christ, the called out, the church) and gives him the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Randolph Dunn)

Note: Repentance is not a mere feeling; it has not the uncertainty of moods and sentiments. It is not a simple change in the weather of the soul. It is a distinct alteration of the focus of the intelligence; it carries with it a movement of the will; in short, it is a revolution in the very ground of the man's being" (REFLECTIONS #515 Al Maxey, Jan. 3, 2012) *The Pulpit Commentary*, vol. 18, p. 66)

### **The Pilgrimage of the New Life**

Baptism as it is presented in Scripture is designed to initiate newness. The scriptural metaphors to describe baptism tell us that it is - a new birth, a regeneration, a resurrection, a newness and not a culmination. In the pilgrimage of what God wants us to be, baptism is the initiation, the beginning point, of that pilgrimage.

Christians often say "I obeyed the gospel referring only to their baptism. That is very much a scriptural term as it is used in 2 Thessalonians 1 while others state I have been baptized into Christ. It's all over now. It's not over, it's just beginning. Belief and repentance and baptism usher us into a lifetime of obedience to the gospel. I've also found that most Christians assume that the teaching on baptism is really only for those who've not yet been baptized.

Do you realize that in the Bible 90% of everything that's said about baptism is said to those who've already been baptized? Most of what the Bible says about baptism is not saying to unbelievers, "Be baptized," rather it's teaching those who already have the implications of their baptism.

In the gospel, we find the foreshadowing of Christian baptism as seen in the baptism unto repentance that's exercised by John in Jesus' own baptism. In the book of Acts, we see both the practice and the necessity of baptism. But in the Epistles which comprise the bulk of our New Testament, we see the implication that flow out of our baptism. Jesus is a great example here. When Jesus was baptized, it was not for the remission of sins because He had none. When Jesus was baptized He was foreshadowing His death. Jesus, several times used the word baptism in His teaching as an allegory of death. When Jesus was being baptized, He

was accepting the mission of the Cross. When He was being baptized, He was accepting the mission of selflessness that would lead all the way to Golgotha.

In the same way, when you are baptized, Jesus calls you not to just the forgiveness of sins, he calls you to follow Him in living a life that confirms your calling. Baptism is a one-time response that leads to a lifetime of responsibility. Mark that well. **It is a one-time response that leads to a lifetime of responsibility.** The Bible pleads over and over for us to live out the implications of our baptism. For example:

Paul states in Colossians 2:12, "having been buried in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead." We're buried with Him, Christ, through baptism. Remember, baptism alone has no power, only as it is a faith exercised into the blood of Christ. Paul continues this thought about what your baptism means "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." (Colossians 3:1)

Do you see what that says? When you die and are raised with Christ spiritually following your burial in baptism, you don't just deal with your past; you have accepted a certain kind of future. Now the questions are: What does that future hold? What are the implications of your baptism? What does it mean to live the baptized life? In the rest of Colossians 3, there are three great implications that you need to remember.

1. At baptism one receives a new morality. "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." (Colossians 3:5)

To be baptized into Christ, is to say to the world, I'm putting to death sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language, lying, all those things and burying them. You have taken off the old self, and you have put on the new. Now some will say "You

don't believe in grace." Make no mistake we're not going to go to heaven by our own goodness. But Paul stated, "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means!" (Romans 6:1 NIV) The King James says, "God forbid!" Don't even think it! And then he goes on to say, "We died to sin, how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?" See it's your baptism that says I'm called out to a new morality. "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."

Now, don't be naïve. The old devil won't give up. A lot of people assume that baptism is going to drown the devil. Baptism will not drown the devil. He's still that old lion out there on the prowl. Baptism is designed to drown your old man, or your old woman. But be assured some will try to tread water. But here's part of the good news of the gospel. The spirit-empowered resurrection that you experience at your baptism broke the grip of sin on your heart and made it possible for you to live a holy life. In fact, not just possible, it is expected.

"Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation" — underlined that word obligation — "but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live by the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because you are led by the Spirit of God and are sons of God." (Romans 8:12)

2. At baptism one receives a new equality. In Colossians 3:11 Paul speaking to those who had put on Christ in baptism states, "Here" (talking about in the church) "there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all." Now those words were far more radical to the first century reader than we can understand today. It's true the walls of discrimination back then were pretty much the same walls that we have today. In the first century, like today, generally society was classified based upon race, gender and social class, but in far more rigid ways than we could ever begin to imagine today.

If you were a Jewish child in the first century, you would hear your Orthodox father pray each day, "Blessed art thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who has not made me a Gentile. Blessed art thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who has not made me a slave. Blessed art thou O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who hath not made me a woman." If you were a Jew, you had religious superiority over a Greek. If

you were free, you had social superiority over a slave. If you were a man, you had both religious and social superiority over a woman. Paul said all those advantages and superiorities were buried in the waters of baptism.

"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." Now listen to this radical statement, it is radical even today. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female." (Galatians 3:26-27) People, I want you to understand the implications of your baptism. At your baptism the barriers that would divide humanity, ceased to exist, or at least they should. Frankly, I think the many Christians still have a long way to go when it comes to living out this implication of baptism, often in regard to the way we treat women, often in regard to the way we treat the poor, certainly with regard to the way ethnic groups treat, or it might be more accurate to say, ignore each other.

Many assemblies of Christians today represent the most segregated part of our society. That must break God's heart. It's not the government's job to break down that wall. It's not Hollywood's job, it's the Christians (church's) job. You say, "Well, it's not my job." Let me tell you something, when you are baptized into Christ, you're supposed to bury bigotry, leave it in the water and to go out of your way to make sure that no brother or sister in any way, shape, form or fashion feels any less equal than you in the eyes of God.

3. At baptism one begins a new fellowship. "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." (Colossians 3:12-15) Do you see the sense of community, the sense of fellowship, the sense of family? Baptism confronts the popular American myth that religion is supposed to be a very private affair.

On Pentecost Day "Those who accepted his message" (as delivered by Peter) "were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (Acts 2:41)

Christians following baptism were added to each other, a new community. They didn't join the church. They were joined to the Church by God. "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:46) People, at baptism, you choose to be numbered with Jesus. There is no way to be a Christian by home correspondence. When you signed up for the Christian voyage, you didn't sign up for the solo tour. At your baptism, you were born into a family. But you also choose to be numbered with those who have chosen Jesus. When baptized into Christ a new fellowship is begun.

Today in the minds of far too many people, baptism is just some rite, some ritual that you do to please God, but it is separate from any attachment to the spiritual community that Christ created. But in Acts at baptism, the Holy Spirit came to every believer.

The Church, Christ's Body, needs to be constantly asking: What it means to be "born again" people. What does it mean to be baptized? God will take us just as we are, but He doesn't want us stay that way. He wants us to grow. He wants us to evaluate ourselves. He wants us to ask, "Am I living out the implications of my baptism?"

Historically, there has been too much talk about being buried in water, rather than being buried with Christ following death to sin. The world isn't going to come to Christ just because of the doctrine of baptism. The world will only come to Christ when they see new spiritual creations living spiritual lives, hear and understand the Word of God, decide to put their faith and trust in Him and obey his Word by dying to sin, have Christ Blood applied by baptismal burial. Then God will resurrect him into a new spiritual creation. (Amazing Grace Lesson #1320, Steve Flatt, June 29, 1997)

