

The New Birth

The
Ordinance
of
BAPTISM

- Mode
- Time
- Purpose
- Requirement

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When is one born again? Has anyone ever been born again, or is the event still future? What does it mean to be born again?

Jesus said, "... Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:3-5).

Jesus referred to a new birth in denoting conversion to Christianity. This includes faith, confession and repentance of our sins, "death unto sin" (Romans 6:11), and baptism. This prepares the way for the entry of the Holy Spirit, marking the birth of a new spiritual being.

Everyone who has received Christ as Saviour, having received a witness of the Spirit of God that he is now a son of God has been born again. Review carefully Jesus' words, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This is a requirement to enter the kingdom of God, not a description of the change to immortality.

The truth that we may be born again by receiving Christ as our Saviour is confirmed in 1 Peter 2:2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." It is stated by some that the words "born" and "begotten" are translated from

The Ordinance of Baptism

When we study the subject of baptism, many questions come to mind: Is it necessary to be baptized? Should we be baptized in water, or is the baptism of the Holy Spirit the only acceptable form of baptism? If a person is to be baptized, does it make any difference as to the mode of baptism? How old should one be before he is baptized? Does baptism wash away sins? Should there be any spiritual preparation made before baptism? Should anyone be re-baptized?

These are all questions worthy of study, because they concern our salvation. We are exhorted to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

Christ Was Baptized

As we begin our study of baptism, we note that Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized. Why should the spotless, sinless, Son of God be baptized? It was not because He had sinned, for John tells us there was no sin in Him (1 John 3:5). The reason for Christ's baptism was to set an example for us. Just as the high priest was washed and anointed before he assumed his tasks (Leviticus 8:6, 12), so Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism to qualify Him for His work as our High Priest.

¹ Scripture quoted in this tract has been set in italic type to give it emphasis and to make it readily recognizable.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

Christ, as the perfect example, also desired to teach a lesson in humility. He knew the human family must learn to humble themselves if they expected to walk with the heavenly Father. James said:

God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble (James 4:6).

If the Lord and Master was willing to humble Himself to the act of baptism, how much more willing should we be to follow His steps? Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.

Jesus said: *I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life (John 8:12).*

In your mind try to picture the scene of the baptism of Christ as described by Matthew:

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending

the same Greek word. This should imply that the word "newborn" in this text may also be translated "newly begotten." This contention is set aside by the observation that these babes are to desire (sincere) milk. A fetus receives no milk; a baby does.

This analogy is strengthened by a passage taken from Hebrews 5:13, 14: "*For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the work of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*" The reference to the change in diet as a person matures indicates that our growth in Christ begins with the new birth.

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat..." (1 Corinthians 3:1, 2).

Note carefully the reaction of Nicodemus to Jesus' initial declaration that a new birth is a requirement to enter the kingdom of God. He asked, "*How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?*" Nicodemus obviously concluded that Jesus' reference to a new birth was a physical experience, and this befuddled him. After restating the need to be born again Jesus offered a clarification. "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*" (John 3:6). This contrast revealed that the new birth was a product of the spirit,

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like a dove, and lighting upon him; and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matthew 3:13-17).

This is certainly a strong proof-text in favor of baptism, for our Lord is our example. Therefore, because Jesus left us such an example, we should be willing to follow in His steps, for He said: "*...he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*"

Jesus Commanded Baptism

Jesus gave this great ordinance of baptism to the church of the living God to be administered by it. He said:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, BAPTIZING² them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world (Matthew 28:19, 20).

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is BAPTIZED shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:15, 16).

It may seem like a needless ritual to comply with the command to be baptized.

²Capitalization used in Scriptural quotations in this tract is used for emphasis: purposes and does not so appear in the Bible.

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not of the flesh. The new birth has no reference to physical change. To conclude that it is physical would be sharing Nicodemus' misunderstanding.

To elaborate, Jesus observed, "*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit*" (John 3:8).

It is contended that this is characteristic of the immortalized, not the justified. It is descriptive of neither. No Scripture describes the celestial body as an invisible wind, nor anything similar to it.

We enter a phase of the kingdom of God when we receive Christ as our Saviour. "*And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! for, behold the kingdom of God is within you*" (Luke 17:20, 21).

Paul refers to this truth in the introduction of his letter to the Colossians, "*Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*" (Colossians 1:12, 13). The new birth qualifies us to enter the spiritual phase of the kingdom now and to receive immortality when Jesus reappears to literally establish His kingdom on earth.

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Yet every Bible student should be quick to agree that Christ always based His teachings on the Scriptures. Baptism is not a useless procedure when it has the blessings of the master Teacher upon it.

Not only were the disciples to teach the Word, but they were also commissioned to baptize those who believed it.

Have you accepted the teachings of God's Word? Have you repented of your sins and been converted? Then you should be baptized. For this is the WILL OF CHRIST.

Preparation for Baptism

It should be helpful to determine what spiritual preparation, if any, should be made before baptism. After Peter had preached that soul-stirring sermon on the Day of Pentecost, his audience cried out:

Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:37, 38).

Notice the 40th and 41st verses:

And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly RECEIVED HIS WORD were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

The same thought, which the candidate for baptism who has received the teachings

Faith

Progress toward the new birth begins with faith. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? ... (Romans 10:13, 14).

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8).

Repentance

Jesus came to call sinners to repentance (Mark 2:17). His introduction to the message of the kingdom was, "...The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

Repenting is an emotional experience. It is to feel so contrite of heart, so crushed in spirit, that one resolves to change his ways. It is to be conscience-stricken and self-reproachful. Because such an emotion is so costly to the human spirit, many attempt to by-pass it in search of a new birth. Such a detour will invariably lead to a dead end. Jesus said, "...Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Mark 13:3).

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of the Word of God pertaining to faith, repentance, and conversion prior to baptism, is brought to our attention in Acts 8. In this chapter we are told of Philip encountering a man of Ethiopia who had been to Jerusalem to worship and was now returning home. As he traveled, he read from the book of Isaiah, and Philip, ordered by the Spirit of God to join this man, asked him if he understood what he was reading. Accepting the invitation to ride with the man, Philip began to preach Christ to him, beginning at the same Scripture where he had been reading. After receiving this teaching, the record tells us:

... as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:36-39).

Baptism must be an outward sign of an inward work. In other words, when we believe in Christ, repent of sins, are converted and willing to walk in the heavenly way, then we are ready for baptism. Remem-

ber, Philip said: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest."
Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up (James 4:7-10).

Confession

After a person acknowledges that he is a sinner, and sees the lost condition he is in, he will confess his sins if he is in earnest about his salvation. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13). The only proper way to get sins covered is by the blood of the Lamb, and that through confession. "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Water Baptism

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:16).

Baptism follows faith, repentance, and con-

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ber, Philip said: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest."

When Peter went to the Gentiles (to the home of Cornelius), with the gospel and the Holy Spirit fell on this devout family and those assembled with them, he said: "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:47, 48).

When Paul had met the conditions of repentance and conversion, the directions given to him were: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

The Washing of Baptism

The text just quoted frequently brings the question to mind: "Does the water of baptism wash away our sins when we observe this ordinance?" This question is answered for us in 1 Peter 3:21:

The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

From the references we have previously considered in this study, we understand that faith, repentance, and conversion must precede baptism in order for it to be acceptable to the heavenly Father. So it takes all of these requirements—faith, repentance, conversion, and baptism—in order for sins to

It represents the burial of our sinful nature, referred to as our "old man" (Romans 6:6). Burial is appropriate only after decease, not as a means of death.

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Our baptism also signals a good conscience toward God. *"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now have us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21).*

Reception of the Holy Spirit

Peter's message was that following repentance and baptism we would "receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." It is this experience which gives real meaning to the term "new birth," because it refers to a birth of the new spirit which is produced from the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It has several important functions.

The Holy Spirit confirms that we are the children of God. *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:14, 16).*

The Holy Spirit confirms that God will fulfill His promise to present to us a glorious inheritance.

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom after ye be-

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be washed away. It is not the water itself that accomplishes this. It takes faith in God and Christ and obedience to the Word of God in order for sins to be washed away. It is not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, not just the actual washing by water, that brings about the forgiveness of sin. It is the answer of a good conscience toward God that brings forgiveness and cleansing.

Do you think it is old-fashioned when someone preaches that people are washed from their sins by the blood of Christ? Well, old-fashioned or not, it is still the teaching of God's holy Word.

In whom [that is, Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace (Ephesians 1:7).

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

One Baptism

Ephesians 4:5 is a thought-provoking verse:

One Lord, one faith, one baptism. . .

If, as the record states, there is only one baptism acceptable to God, then each person should be very careful as to the mode of baptism he accepts. Is it true that the Bible substantiates baptism by immersion? If so, then everyone should be baptized this way.

Baptism is likened unto a burial.

Know ye not, that so many of us as

never, ye were buried with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:13, 14).

The Holy Spirit leads us into truth. *"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26).*

The Holy Spirit provides sustaining strength. *"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. . ." (Ephesians 3:16, 17).*

The Holy Spirit reveals glories in this life and the life to come. *"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).*

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:9, 10).

Evidence of the New Birth

In comparing the new birth of the spirit to a wind, Jesus indicated that one cannot

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were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection (Romans 6:3-5).

Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead (Colossians 2:12).

When a person becomes dead to sin, through faith, repentance, and conversion, the next step is to bury the old man of sin in baptism, that the individual may arise from the watery grave to walk in newness of life. A quickening, a resurrection from the dead, has taken place in our lives.

And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses (Colossians 2:13).

The only way to properly bury a person is to put him completely under the ground. Likewise the only burial that can constitute a baptismal burial is to immerse (completely submerge) in water the one to be baptized. Notice how this corresponds with the baptism of Christ and that of the Ethiopian eunuch. Christ, when He was baptized, *"WENT UP straightway OUT of the water."*

serve the effects. This suggests that there are evidences of the new birth. Among the many, we list the following:

1. Righteous living. "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him" (1 John 2:29). "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18).

2. Demonstrating brotherly love. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God... He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:7, 8).

3. Overcoming the world. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world..." (1 John 5:4).

4. Old ways are forsaken. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (1 Corinthians 5:17).

The Bible teaches that in order to enter the kingdom of God one must be born again. The steps to this experience are made clear, the functions of the Holy Spirit are outlined, and the evidences of the new birth are explained. It remains for us to comprehend and to obey.

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The eunuch and Philip "WENT DOWN both INTO the water." The record states:

...they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip... (Acts 8:38, 39).

In this instance both the preacher and the candidate went down into the water. The eunuch was baptized IN water, not water placed ON him.

But here is a thought worthy of consideration: Why not make sure of this matter, for if there is no harm in being baptized by immersion, and seemingly that is the only form of baptism blessed by the Lord, then why not be baptized by immersion?

At What Age Should One Be Baptized?

Now we would like to consider the question: How old should a person be before he is baptized?

People place much dependance on the so-called age of accountability, but this phrase is not to be found in the Bible. Some believe this age is twelve, because Christ was that age when he talked with the doctors and lawyers about the Word of God.

We should certainly do all in our power to encourage our children to live for God at an early age. They should know what they are doing when they submit themselves for baptism, and if they have Christian parents it will be a long step forward in their favor.

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Parents, children are an heritage of the Lord (Psalm 127:3), and you should do your best to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

When a thoughtful child was asked why a certain tree in the garden was crooked, he said he "sposed somebody must have stepped on it when it was a little fellow." Let us be careful we do not step on these little fellows and cause their lives to become crooked.

Should Infants Be Baptized?

The thought of infant baptism should be studied from two viewpoints: Are there ways of baptism other than immersion? and is it necessary to repent and be converted BEFORE baptism?

We have already established that the only mode of baptism supported by Scripture is that of immersion. But an added thought might not be amiss. John baptized those coming to him in the river Jordan (Matthew 3:6; Mark 1:5, 9), and he also baptized in Aenon near to Salim because there was much water there (John 3:23). It would not take much water to sprinkle or pour water on the head (if such constituted baptism), but immersion takes much water. The symbol of baptism representing a burial and resurrection cannot be lightly regarded. You cannot see this symbol in the rite of sprinkling or pouring.

It is quite evident from such texts as Acts 2:38: "...Repent and be baptized

everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost"; and Matthew 3:8: "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance"; that some spiritual preparation is necessary prior to baptism. The candidate for baptism should not only feel sorry enough about his sins to ask God to forgive him but earnestly and sincerely express the desire to cease from sin.

In the parable Jesus told about the Pharisee and the publican going to the temple to pray, the publican humbled himself before the Lord, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Jesus said this man went to his house justified (Luke 18:9-14).

When David realized he had sinned before the Lord, he prayed:

Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgression: and my sin is ever before me (Psalm 51:1-3).

An infant is mentally unable to ask for forgiveness and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Yet the Bible definitely teaches that this spiritual preparation should precede baptism.

We have the example of Jesus blessing the children when they were brought to Him, but there is no Biblical account of infants being baptized.

Should People Be Rebaptized?

Sometimes when a Christian accepts new light on a certain important doctrine, or accepts fellowship with another church, the question is often asked: "Should such a person be rebaptized?"

There is one example which should be considered, and it is found in Acts 19. While Paul was traveling, he met certain disciples at Ephesus, and he questioned them about their spirituality. Possibly he was curious because of their lack of power.

He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? [The Revised Version words it: "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when ye believed?"] And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:2-5).

Christian baptism not only demands repentance, as John instructed, but regeneration taking place in the believer's life by faith in Christ Jesus.

If you have been baptized by immersion by a Christian person, and have been baptized into Christ, and you are satisfied with

your spiritual experience at that time, then there should be no need of your being rebaptized.

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment (Hebrews 6:1, 2).

However, if you are not satisfied, possibly because of not fully realizing what you were doing at the time of your baptism, then the best course to pursue would be to be rebaptized.

Should Baptisms Be In Running Water?

It is thought that the Bible teaches people should be baptized in running water. However, there is no text that proves this belief. We do have the example of Christ being baptized in a river and of John baptizing in a river, but the sole requirement, as far as the water is concerned in the baptismal rite, is that it be deep enough to bury the candidate in it.

It is good to keep in mind that the Bible speaks of baptism as a burial in water, and that it does not specify whether it should be running water or water in a tank or baptistry.

Summary

In summarizing our study we would point

out that our Lord was baptized, and that He admonished us to follow His steps, and that Peter called the people to repent and be baptized. We referred to the conversion of Saul, or Paul, and how the disciple sent to him by the Lord commanded him to arise and be baptized, washing away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord. We showed that Christ commissioned the church of the living God to go into all the world, preach the gospel, and baptize believers.

Now what should one do who has been enlightened about baptism? Should he shrug his shoulders and go on his way without Christ as his companion? Or should he immediately make his decision to answer the call of Christ and be baptized.

Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30).

There is but one answer: be baptized by immersion without delay.

When we are baptized, we signify that we not only believe God is able to wash away our sins by the blood of Christ, but we also declare our faith in the resurrective power of the Lord.

For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death [baptism], we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection (Romans 6:5).

God is able to raise us from the watery grave of baptism and empower us to walk the Christian way. By that same power He is able to bring our bodies back from the grave in the hour of the glorious resurrection.

And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16).

Do not delay accepting this important doctrine of baptism. After having met the conditions of God's Word, then be baptized in the Lord.

Perhaps you are delaying because you do not fully understand all of the Bible. Walk in the light you have, and God will give you more understanding. If you know you should repent, be converted, baptized, and rise to walk in the newness of life, then act on that knowledge. You are then ready to grow in grace and in knowledge; and you should, as a newborn babe in Christ, desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby (1 Peter 2:2).

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry... (1 Sam. 15:23).

If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them (John 13:17).

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