

Baptism (part 5 of 6): The New Birth By Alan Hitchen

Review - The Amazing Powers of Baptism

In our study thus far we have seen eight different things proving Jesus gave baptism an essential role in his kingdom. **First**, immediately after the resurrection and prior to his ascension he commanded baptism twice: to make disciples (Mt. 28:18-20) and to bring salvation (Mk. 16:15-16). **Second**, baptism was commanded by Peter in his first sermon to the Jew and to the Gentile (Acts 2:37-41; Acts 10:47-48). **Third**, baptism was a matter of course to the Samaritans, the Eunuch (Acts 8:12-13; 36-38), Lydia, the Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:14-15; 32-33), those in Corinth and in Ephesus (Acts 18:6-8; 19:4-5). **Fourth**, only baptism can join us with Jesus to give us the benefits of his death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:11-13). **Fifth**, baptism saves us the same way the ark saved Noah (1 Pet. 3:20-21). **Sixth**, Israel was baptized into Moses as we are into Christ and going through the Red Sea saved them through water as we're saved through baptism (1 Cor 10:13). **Seventh**, baptism is a circumcision of Christ making us Abraham's seed and heirs to all the promises. This circumcision also cuts away the body of flesh and heart of stone, leaving a living heart devoted to God (Col. 2:11-13; Gal. 3:27-29). **Eighth**, Paul was told to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins (Acts 22:16). How much more could the Spirit do with passages, shadows, types, commands and examples to prove baptism is essential to salvation?

The Conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus

When the Messiah came to Israel, Nicodemus was one of a few Jewish leaders who respected him. His first words: "*Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him*" (Jn. 3:2). The master teacher opened his "class" with: "*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,*" and then "*unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*" (Jn. 3:3-7). Obviously Jesus wanted to give him something deep and difficult to meditate upon. Jesus knew Nicodemus would not understand until the kingdom came. He had nothing to relate or compare it to. Only when Jesus began to reign in his kingdom would it become simple and easy to understand. Our first birth is made simple only because we see it happen. The new birth will be just as simple when at Peter's direction people begin to enter the kingdom.

The King Was Reigning on the Day of Pentecost

On Pentecost, the power of the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles (Acts 2:1-4). Peter was then given "*the keys of the kingdom of heaven*" (Mt 16:19), revealing that God had fulfilled his promise to David to "*raise up the Christ to sit on his throne.*" His son Jesus was "*exalted to the right hand of God,*" as "*Lord and Christ*" (Acts 2:22-39). God had "*set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.*" Jesus had come "*to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.*" (Dan 2:44; 7:13-14). Cut to the heart, they asked what they could do. "*Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*" (Acts 2:36-39). Anyone with a love for the truth must see that the water of baptism and the Holy Spirit's words are the new birth: "*Those who gladly received his word*

were **baptized**; and that day about three thousand souls **were added** to them.” So the new birth is accomplished by receiving the Holy Spirit’s word and then being baptized. Though these two actions, God “*delivered us from the power of darkness: and “conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love”* (Col. 1:13-14). This is what Philip did in Samaria and “*when they believed Philip as he **preached**... things concerning the **kingdom**... both men and women were **baptized**”* (Acts 8:12).

The Only Thing Associated with Water is Baptism!

When the Eunuch heard Philip preaching these things and he saw water he said, “*Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?*” Then, “*both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.*” But the most powerful argument is that as soon as “*they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more*” (Acts 8:38-39). Why would he do that unless Philip was finished? When the Eunuch was baptized, the sermon ended. Thus the Eunuch was saved and born again! Peter did the same thing preaching to Cornelius “***words** by which you and all your household will be saved.*” The sermon ended with: “*Can anyone forbid **water**, that these should not be **baptized***” and “*commanded them to be **baptized***” (Acts 11:14; 10:47-48). If this is not the water of the new birth what is?

The Spirit used Gospel (Word) to Accomplish his Work

Peter summed up the role of the Spirit in the new birth: “*having **been born again**, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the **word of God** which lives and abides forever,... now this is **the word which by the gospel** was preached to you.*” (1 Pet 1:23). Since the Holy Spirit revealed the gospel, he is the true author and whatever the gospel does is done by the Spirit. When we are born again by the incorruptible seed of the gospel, we are born again by the Holy Spirit.

Other Scriptures verify this conclusion. **First**, when comparing the love of a husband to Christ’s love for the church, Paul said Jesus gave “*Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the **washing of water** by the **word***” (Eph 5:25-26). Jesus death can only sanctify by the washing of water (baptism) with the Word (the Spirit’s inspired revelation). **Second**, Paul told the Corinthians it was “*by one **Spirit** we were all **baptized** into one body*” (1 Cor 12:13). When the Spirit commands us to be baptized in water we are born of water and the Spirit! **Third**, “*in Christ Jesus I **begat** you through the **gospel***” (1 Cor 12:13), but just like the Eunuch, “*the Corinthians, **hearing**, believed and were **baptized**.*” (Acts 18:8) **Fourth**, “*of his own will he **brought us forth (Gave Birth To Us)** by the **word** of truth*” (Jas 1:18). How much clearer could God make it? The Holy Spirit used the gospel to move people toward the new birth and the water of baptism to complete it!

What it Means to be Born Again

So added to everything else baptism does, it possesses the power of the new birth. What Jesus told Nicodemus has now been revealed. In baptism, God “*saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*” (Titus 3:4-7). Baptism brings both the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit. This is so sublime we will never fully comprehend it. Placing the two side by side shows its amazing power. In our first birth God placed an eternal soul in a body of flesh. Since this is the illustration, only when we really

understand this can we grasp the spiritual reality of the new birth. In the new birth, the eternal soul originally given but now dead in sin is renewed! We are “*baptized into Christ*” (Gal 3:27) and “*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new*” (2 Cor 5:17). Who can fully explain such amazing revelations? More simply when “*buried with Him in baptism, ... being dead in your trespasses ... He has made alive together with Him.*” (Col 2:12-13). “*You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God*” (1 Cor 6:11).

In the water of baptism a work of power as incredible as our first birth is wrought! “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*” (Jn. 3:6). Both are amazing and astonishing. The Spirit sought to reveal the amazing power of our birth: “*I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works... I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought...*” (Ps. 139:14-15). Thus he reveals the first birth. In the new birth we are just as “*fearfully and wonderfully made,*” and just as “*skillfully wrought!*” In the water of baptism, a power similar to that used in the resurrection of Christ now works in us (Col 2:12). We were dead, made alive, and then freed from sin (Rom 6:4-7). Power beyond imagination is unleashed in baptism.

Can anyone truly comprehend all this? But even if we never understand the deeper and more complex elements of the new birth, one thing is clear and simple. Baptism is an indispensable part of it.

In the final part of this series, we will examine what it means to be “in Christ”.