

## The Importance of Baptism

Perhaps the most powerful and compelling argument set forth in the New Testament on the essential nature of baptism, second only to it being a command of Jesus (Mat. 28:19-20), comes in its association with His death, burial and resurrection. Paul sets forth in Romans 6:3-11 the following points: (1) Baptism is into the death of Jesus, (2) it is a burial (*baptidzo* means to immerse, never sprinkle or pour) from which an individual is raised by God, (3) newness of life (being born again) follows baptism, (4) it is in the likeness of Jesus' resurrection, (5) in baptism our "old man" (body of sin) is crucified with Christ, (6) only then are we freed from sin, (7) and only then are we "...*alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" The Bible student can clearly see by this comparison that the obedience of faith manifested in baptism is of no less importance to the sinner than the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus with which it is associated. The very power of the crucifixion of Christ is brought to bear on behalf of the sinner when he is baptized into Christ. Paul's Spirit inspired mastery of logic is withering to the false doctrine of salvation before, or apart from baptism.

Note that for each of the preceding positive points there are possibilities of seven negatives: (1) Apart from baptism man is apart from and out of the crucified Savior (also Gal. 3:27), (2) one who has not died with Christ cannot be raised by God, (3) newness of life cannot be enjoyed by the one not baptized (also Jn. 3:3-5), (4) nor may one be raised in the likeness of Jesus' resurrection, (5) having not obeyed from the heart one remains in the body of sin and a servant of sin (also Rom. 6:16-17, 23), (6) not being freed from sin one remains in bondage to it, (7) remaining dead in sin one cannot be alive unto God through Christ.

Peter makes the unmistakably clear statement that, "*There is also an antitype which now saves us; baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet 3:20-21).*" To the follower of Christ Peter says that baptism is no more a mere symbol of salvation than the ark would have been a mere symbol to Noah and his family. God chose the ark (in its detail, construction, loading, etc.) as the means by which Noah was to express his faith (Heb. 11:7), without which he and his family would have been destroyed with the remainder of the world. Clearly then, baptism, immersion in water unto the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 8:36; Mk. 16:16), is of no less importance to the one who would please God today as was the ark for Noah, and without which the disobedient will be lost with the rest of the world.

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