

Baptism: United with Christ in Death and New Life

Jesus invites us to come and die so that we may find out what it means to really live. If your life is not working the way you hoped it would, Jesus invites you to a NEW life. He said “whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life, for my sake will find it.” Entering the kingdom of God is like dying, and then being resurrected. It is like losing an old life and gaining a new and better life. But it is more than being merely LIKE that. There is REAL death that takes place in us and a real new life that is born in us.

Any religious experience that does not involve this inward death and resurrection with Jesus, is incomplete, and leaves people disappointed, and still NOT saved! We are not inviting anyone to “get religion”. The gospel invites us to a death that liberates us from our old life, AND to a new life with power and desire to please God!

When we are genuinely united with Christ, there is something in us that dies! The Bible calls it the flesh, not our physical body, but our old self which was inclined to sin, to ignore God, and to go it's own way. Romans 6:6, “We know that our “old self” was crucified with him in order that “the body of sin” might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin”. We all know Jesus was executed by crucifixion. When a person is united to Christ an invisible but powerful crucifixion of their old life is put into effect.

This is not a BAD thing!! Romans 6:7 says the one who has died “has been set free from sin.” This death, loosens sins grip on our life. It releases us from the powerful hold of things like anger and hatred, complaining and grumbling, gossip and slander, jealousy and envy, resentment and bitterness, pornography and sexual sins of all kinds, pride, selfishness and self pity, addictions to alcohol and

drugs and things like these. This death frees us from all things that wage war against our souls and work to destroy us!

We DO have an active part in this. We are told to CONSIDER ourselves dead to sin, and alive to God. We are told to “put off the old self”. But the power that crucifies the old self comes from being united with Christ. Romans 6 “we have been united WITH HIM in a death like his” And “we have been buried WITH HIM” and “our old self was crucified WITH HIM”

When you are united with Christ you are no longer content to go on living in sin. Your death with Jesus actually impedes your ability to keep on sinning. 1 John 3:9 says, “No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God”.

Your death with Jesus also frees you from the world and from having to conform to the world, and please the world. When you are united with Jesus the world regards you as an outcast and you are just fine with that because you died to the world! Paul said, “I’ve been crucified to the world and the world has been crucified to me. Spurgeon said, “A corpse is not welcome company; he is poor company for worldlings, and they shun him as a damper upon their revelry. 1 Peter 4:4 “They are surprised that you do not join them in their reckless, wild living, and they heap abuse on you.”

It is impossible to be truly united with Jesus and not be united with him in this inward death to sin and the old self.

**** But being united with Jesus is not only about dying. God births within us a new and powerful life! We become fully alive! Jesus said “I came that you might have life and have it abundantly”.

This new life is God himself coming to live in us by His Spirit. God pours his Spirit into our hearts and forms Christ in us. William Law said, “The one thing absolutely essential to man’s salvation is the Spirit of God living and working in the spirit of man”.

Jesus said no one can enter God’s kingdom unless he is born of the Spirit. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." John Piper said, "Flesh" in John's gospel simply means human. " So Jesus is saying, your human birth makes you merely human. But when you are born of the Spirit, then a new dimension of supernatural life enters in: spiritual life, new loves, new inclinations, new allegiance. A new person is born.”

Without the present working of the Holy Spirit in us, all we have left is a religion with no power and no life. All we have left is our own efforts to be a better person. But Christ calls us to a supernatural life, of loving our enemies, and forgiving those who sin against us. He calls us to a life of always rejoicing, of always giving thanks, of exulting in our trials, of singing and making music in our hearts to the Lord. He calls us to a life of loving, honoring and serving others; he calls us to love God, to be pure and patient, and kind. This is a life that can only come from the Spirit of God. We must be born of the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, led by the Spirit. We must HAVE new life to LIVE the new life!!

Paul said, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” If we are in Christ, we are

not trapped IN our past. We are not trapped BY our past, We are not trapped by other people, or by parents or family, or by the circumstances of our past. We are not bound by what we once were. Christ makes us so new that it is like being a new creature!

But although the changes in us are so dramatic the WAY into this new life is simple. You must realize that you are broken and need to be put back together. You must be willing to turn from your old life of sin. And then you turn and call out to the Lord to save you. You trust in Jesus to forgive your sins, AND to make you a new person.

God gave baptism to us as a picture of this inward spiritual work of death of the old self and of the new life Jesus gives us.

Colossians 2 says we have “been buried with him IN BAPTISM, in which we were also raised with him”. Romans 6:3-4 “Do you not know that all of us who have been BAPTIZED into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him BY BAPTISM into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

Although baptism is an outward expression, the experience of baptism can have a powerful effect upon us! It confirms and clarifies in our hearts the real spiritual action of dying with Jesus and being raised with Jesus! Praise is not fully complete until you actually open up your mouth and sing or shout to the Lord. Gratitude is not complete until you actually give thanks! Your marriage ceremony is not quite complete until you put the ring on your finger and signify to everyone that you are married. Baptism is

God's designated activity that formally expresses your union with Jesus. This is not just a church activity or tradition! God gave it!!

*Baptism is an outward certification that you died with Jesus. It is an experience, you can always look back to and say "I WAS BURIED WITH HIM IN BAPTISM!"

*Baptism is also an announcement that you have been raised up out of that grave. You come up out of the water! Paul said, "having been buried with him in baptism, in (baptism) you were ALSO RAISED with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead". You can always look back to baptism and say I was raised up with Christ into a new life by the power of God. God made me a new person in Christ Jesus!!

*Your baptism is a bold assertion of your faith before others. You are openly expressing your union with Jesus before people." You are saying "I am a follower of Jesus, no matter what others think, and no matter how I may be treated for it". In many places, even today, baptism leads to persecution and rejection by family and society.

*Finally your baptism identifies you with the people of God. At baptism you are saying "God's people are now my people". This is now my family. These are my brothers and sisters! You have been raised up out of your old life to a new life with Christ and you are joined to others who share that new life.

God, Pour out your Spirit into the hearts of those who will be baptized this morning! Give them boldness to tell what you have done for them. I pray for a fresh and mighty outpouring of the Holy

Spirit upon all here in this room today. May people be saved here this morning! May we all be deeply aware of your presence with us.