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Romans

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Romans 6:3

The subject of baptism is long, complicated, and more often than not misunderstood. Some denominations claim that water baptism is required in order to be saved, some denominations perform infant baptism, etc. What is being spoken of here is not concerning water baptism. Paul begins this verse with "Or do you not know..."

In using this term, he is expanding on the previous idea which is that we have "died to sin." Therefore, what Paul is speaking of has nothing to do with an external rite. When we receive Jesus by faith, we die to sin. At this moment, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13,14) and a change takes place; we die to sin and we are thus "baptized into Christ Jesus." We were, as Paul notes, "baptized into His death."

This is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is a once for all-time occurrence. Being filled with the Spirit is a repeatable event, but the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the regeneration of the spiritually dead soul to eternal life and it happens only once. Paul indicates this elsewhere, such as in Galatians 3:26, 27 -

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

Putting on Christ is to be imputed His righteousness. We are now covered, or clothed, in Christ. When God looks at us, He no longer sees our sins, but instead Christ's righteousness. In Galatians, Paul ties this "faith in Christ Jesus" directly with being "baptized into Christ." They are one single act. Paul further defines this new relationship in 1 Corinthians 12:13 -

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."

This is the glory of the death and resurrection of Jesus for us. What was dead is made alive by a mere act of faith. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-5 we are shown this was actually pictured in Israel's exodus through the Red Sea. It is quite evident that water baptism is not at all involved in the process. The faith is exercised, the righteousness is granted, the Spirit is given, and then - only then - is the sign received; that of water baptism. This is the exact same pattern as what occurred with Abraham.

Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. The relationship was restored, and only then did he receive the sign of circumcision. This process is clear and concise and it negates the validity of "infant baptism." It is an unscriptural rite which in no way replaces circumcision as is claimed by those who practice it. Coming to Christ is an individual act of faith. Only after this act is demonstrated does water baptism serve any purpose. It is an outward demonstration of the inward change.

Water baptism has nothing to do with salvation. Instead, it has to do with obedience. When a person is saved, they then make a public demonstration of their new life. They go to the water just as Jesus went to the cross. They are fully submerged (the Greek word for baptism indicates full submersion and therefore the word was transliterated, not translated, in an attempt to avoid confusion) as a picture of going into the grave, just as Jesus' body was laid in the tomb. And finally, the person is raised out of the water as a picture of being raised to newness of life through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the intent and purpose of water baptism.

Life application: If you have received Jesus, you are saved. Water baptism has nothing to do with your salvation. However, Jesus gave two ordinances to His followers. The first is water baptism and the second is the Lord's Supper. In obedience to His directives, don't you think it's time to be properly baptized as an open profession of your inward change?

Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Romans 6:4

"Therefore..." Because of what was stated in 6:1-3, we come to the following conclusion: Those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord "were buried with Him through baptism into death." Again and as previously noted, this is referring to the baptism of the Holy Spirit - the total immersion of the old man into Christ's death, being completely covered by His righteousness and thus resulting in us being "in" Christ. The sealing of the Spirit is the baptism of the Spirit; it is a one-time act which moves us from Adam to Christ.

In acknowledgement of this act, we are expected to follow this inward change with an outward demonstration of that change - full immersion baptism in water. How can we be certain that water baptism isn't specifically being spoken of here and that it is therefore some type of a requirement for salvation? Verses such as Acts 2:38 and Mark 16:16 seem to indicate that water baptism is a requirement for salvation. Although lengthy in explanation, a short summary of those two verses can't hurt.

First Acts 2:38 - "Then 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."

The first thing to note is that this is Peter speaking to the people of Israel who had previously rejected Christ. Therefore, Peter instructs them to "repent" of this mindset. Because of their rejection of Him, Peter expected them to be baptized

before they would receive the Holy Spirit. The gentiles were not even a consideration at this point. Comparing the order of the event in Acts 2 with the events involving the Samaritans in Acts 8 and the gentiles in Acts 10, it becomes apparent that Acts 2 was a unique requirement and a one-time event for the people of Israel. It describes what occurred at Pentecost and what was expected of the Israelites, it doesn't prescribe what is the norm.

Second is Mark 16:16 - "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

On the surface and taken without careful consideration, this verse may appear to indicate one must be water baptized in order to be saved. But this isn't at all the case. Jesus is tying belief to baptism; "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." However, baptism is not mentioned in connection with condemnation. "...he who does not believe will be condemned." Therefore, belief and baptism occur simultaneously; it is speaking of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, not water baptism. This simply confirms what John spoke prior to the beginning of Jesus' ministry -

"I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."
(Luke 3:16)

The baptism which comes by faith in Christ is this baptism referred to by John and which is spoken of in Mark 16:16.

This then, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is where we are "buried with Him through baptism into death." We have died to sin and been born again by the Spirit of God. Paul then continues by stating "that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Just as we died to sin through Christ, we are also raised from the dead in Christ. This is being born again.

Christ's coming out of the grave was "by the glory of the Father." Because we are united with Him in this marvelous new way, "we also should walk in newness of life." The ultimate goal of our salvation isn't the prospect of walking on streets of gold for all eternity. The ultimate goal is to bring glory to God. God's glory is the reason why Christ came, why He died, and why He was raised again. These actions were done for us so that we could bring His Father glory.

Life application: We have died to sin and been raised to newness of life through Jesus. Because this is a fact, let us also walk in that newness of life, mortifying the flesh and living in holiness in the presence of our glorious God.