

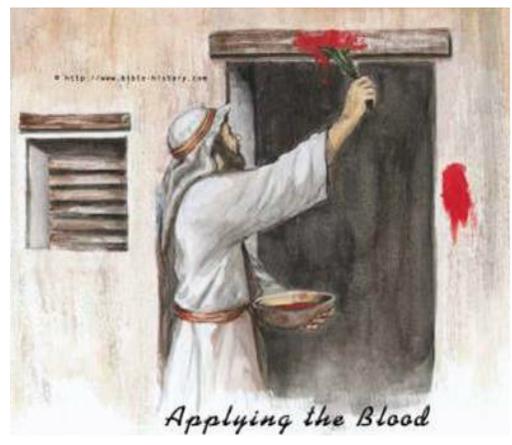
WHAT IT MEANS TO BE IN CHRIST

PART 2

THE ROLE OF SPIRITUAL BAPTISM

“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.”

1 Cor. 12:13 NKJV



Review of Study 4

The relationship between the believer and God (all three persons) has become closer and more intimate as we progress through the Bible. The believer today has the closest and most intimate relationship with God possible. The Holy Spirit is no longer alongside or upon us; the Spirit is now within the believer, He will not leave us, and He is the seal holding us into Christ. The believer is said to be in Christ, but exactly how does that happen? The Holy Spirit not only comes within us upon belief, but He put us into Christ by means of a special, spiritual baptism (1 Cor. 12:13). The Godhead is a Unity, so when the Holy Spirit comes within us, He brings the fullness of the Godhead with Him. Thus, we are in Christ and He is in us. The spiritual baptism we receive identifies us with Christ, making us one with Him. The believer is so totally united with Christ that His life becomes ours; thus, we are circumcised, dead, buried, raised, seated in heaven ... with Christ.

Introduction

The previous lesson mentions a rather unusual thing—being baptized into Christ. You may wonder if this is some weird teaching or perhaps some cultish belief. No, it is very biblical and important; however, it is generally an ignored topic because it is hard to explain and because people have trouble getting past the idea that baptism can be something other than a water ceremony. We will discuss this topic in a tactful, truthful manner. The reason we have to be tactful is because any discussion of baptism can be a very hot topic; people get very upset with new ideas or thoughts contrary to what they believe. We must be truthful because the baptism we will discuss is involved in our salvation. We will attempt to present spiritual baptism in a way that imparts God's truth without getting into the controversial issues of water baptism.

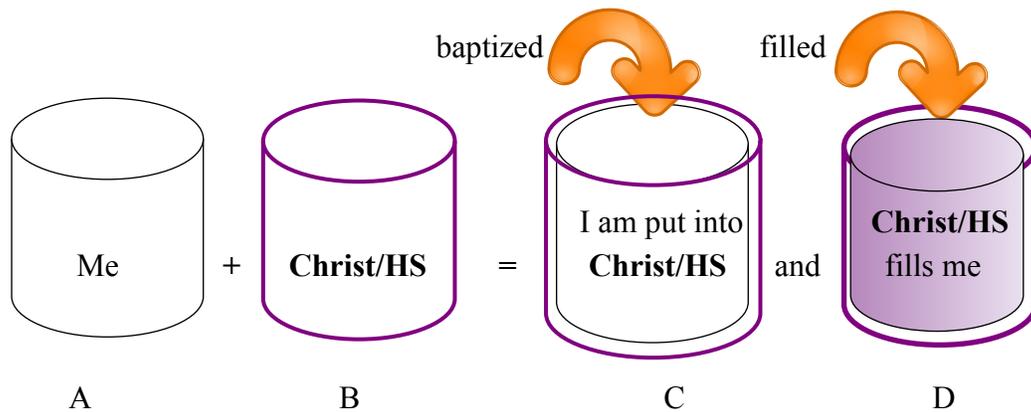
Spiritual baptism is an action performed by the Holy Spirit on the believer the moment she or he first believes in Christ, **"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...."** (1 Cor. 12:13a). There is no water involved. It is a real baptism, which takes place on the spiritual level. When the Holy Spirit baptizes us into Christ, our sins are

forgiven and we are saved (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:11-13; Gal. 3:27). This baptism is as important as anything gets, but rarely taught. Again, this is not a baptism performed by any human being; it has nothing to do with water; and is an operation of God/Holy Spirit. The diagram below from Study 4 serves as a visual aid showing how a person *is put into* Christ by this baptism.

Discuss: Since the Holy Spirit does this baptism, we can be sure it is done on time, done correctly, and achieves the desired purpose. We do not have this assurance with anything done by humans. Discuss how important it is that all aspects of salvation rest upon God, not humans.

In the Age of Grace

I am baptized into Christ, and filled with His perfection



BIBLE TRUTH

Types of Baptism

There are many types of baptisms in the Bible. We often read about the various baptisms and have no clue what they mean; we sort of skip over them thinking some smart theologians must know what this all means. However, the Bible was written so we can all know. An interesting point is that most of the baptisms in the Bible have no connection with water. Therefore, we have to condition our minds to realize baptism is not necessarily a water-based Christian ceremony.

Here are four (of many) biblical examples of real, but non-water baptisms:

1. Baptism into Moses (1 Cor. 12:2)
2. Christ's death baptism (Matt. 20:22-23)
3. Baptism with Holy Spirit and fire (Luke 3:16)

4. The Holy Spirit baptizing the believer into Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:11-13; Gal. 3:27)

Spiritual baptism (number 4 above) is the baptism primarily under consideration; it is called spiritual baptism because the Holy Spirit performs this baptism. Spiritual baptism is vitally important; but just as another person cannot see your faith, he or she cannot see this baptism.

What Baptism Always Accomplishes

The main thing to know about all baptisms is they accomplish *something important*. The *something important* invariably gets lost in discussions of water baptism, because the mode (how the water is applied) becomes the overriding issue (whether by pouring, sprinkling, putting-into, dipping, immersing...).

Thankfully, the mode is not an issue with spiritual baptism, so the true accomplishment of this baptism is not lost. The fact we can discuss this baptism and not get side tracked is a true blessing since this baptism is the most important one of our lives.

The plain and simple truth about all baptisms (including water) is they accomplish this: **baptism identifies one thing with another.** In number 1 above, those who followed Moses in crossing the Red Sea were identified with his faith; in number 2, Christ had to be identified with death; in number 3, Christ identified the believers with the Holy Spirit and with fire at Pentecost. We have to be careful not to confuse number 3 with 4. In number 3, Christ was the baptizer, and He used the Holy Spirit to give special powers; in number 4, the Holy Spirit is the baptizer, and He places us into Christ. In the case of spiritual baptism (number 4), we are the *thing* that is identified with *another*, Christ. Baptisms, in general, are a way of showing a strong identity (unity, bond, relationship) between two things.

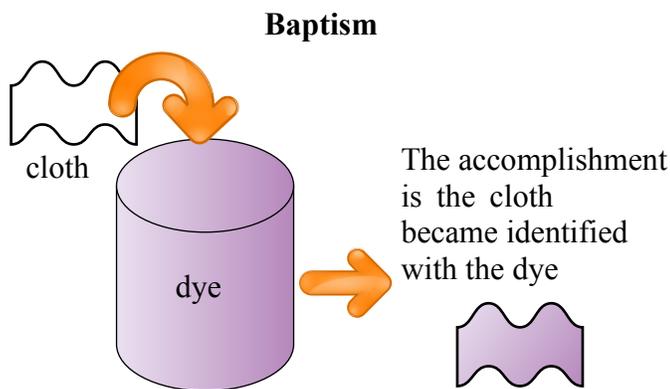
To help further grasp the concept of identification, consider how the word *baptism* originally was used. In secular writings in Old Testament times, and later, the term *baptism* was used in reference to dying fabric. When a piece of cloth was put into (*baptized*) a liquid with dye, the cloth took-on the color of the dye. The cloth became identified with the dye; that is, it had the identical color of the dye.

Baptism, baptize, and so forth, are Greek words, and they are first found in English Bibles in the Gospels, which were originally in Greek. However, as noted above, these words were in use long before the Gospel period. In fact, these words were used in the Old Testament in the Septuagint version (the Greek version of the Old Testament, the version Jesus used). The meaning of baptism can be learned by the early use of the word, and the first occurrence (in the Septuagint) of the word *baptize* is found in Exodus 12:22a, "**And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin.**" The word *dip* is the English translation for the basic Greek word *baptize*. There was no water, just the blood of a lamb. A bunch of hyssop (a plant) was dipped into the blood of a lamb; then, the blood-soaked hyssop was used to apply the blood around the door of a house, to protect the inhabitants from death. The Lord would *pass-over* a house with blood on the doorway, averting death in that house. This event took place in Egypt and became known as the Passover. The firstborn boys of the houses identified with the blood were saved from death.

Discuss: A cloth dipped (baptized) in dye takes on the character of the dye. Similarly, the Holy Spirit baptizes the believer into Christ; as a result, the believer takes on the character of Christ.

Our Passover Lamb

The application of the Passover to us is clear; Christ was the perfect Lamb of God Who shed His blood because of our sins. He was our substitute on the Cross; He was the sacrifice that paid the penalty for all the sins of the world so that we may have eternal life. Because of His sacrifice, God can *pass-over* our sins (i.e., He removes them and forgives us). Just as the blood of the lamb on the doorway saved the Israeli people from death, so, too, the blood of the Lamb (Christ) delivers us from eternal death. They were saved physically from death by the blood of the lamb; we are saved from eternal, spiritual death (separation from God) by the blood of the Lamb.



Example of putting a piece of cloth in a dye. The cloth becomes identified with the dye.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

We now know that through spiritual baptism the blood of the Lamb is applied to us. This is important, for we know we have to be identified with Christ's blood (death), just as the Israeli people were identified with the sacrificial lamb. This identification with Christ is what spiritual baptism is about. Christ is the perfect Lamb of God, as such, spiritual death will pass over us and we will have eternal life in heaven if we are identified with Him.

How We Are Identified with Him

In the Age of Grace (first century until now), the believer is spiritually baptized into Christ, **"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...."** (1 Cor. 12:13a). This spiritual baptism is an operation of the Holy Spirit placing us into Christ. Recall, a bunch of hyssop became identified with the sacrificial lamb's death when it was dipped in the blood; then the house was identified with that lamb's death when the blood was applied to the doorway. The way the blood was applied does not seem to be an issue; *the issue was being identified with that blood*. Spiritual baptism is what identifies us with Christ.

Study: spiritual baptism is mentioned in these passages: Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 2:11-13; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:5. Please read them and then continue with this study.

It is important to see the spiritual aspect of the verses in the study above and not, mistakenly, think these verses support water baptismal ceremonies. Often these verses are used to teach that water baptism is a symbol of a deeper spiritual baptism (salvation); however, it is important to know these verses refer to *the real thing—not the symbol*. If these verses were the symbol, where do we find the verses teaching what they symbolize? In other words, if these verses are referring to water baptism as the symbol of the deeper, spiritual baptism; where then is the teaching of that deeper baptism to be found? That teaching would not be in the Bible. These verses are the deeper teaching, the substance, the reality,

of what is occurring in the spiritual realm by God's actions, not what humans may be doing in the earthly realm. These verses teach how a believer is placed *into Christ* and thereby saved.

First Corinthians 12:13 plainly states there is a baptism by the Spirit that places us into Christ. If the Spirit's baptism (spiritual baptism) places the believer into Christ, then other references to a baptism that does the same work must also be due to the Spirit's baptism. Surely, there are not two separate and distinct ways of getting into the Body of Christ.¹ Thus, Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27 must also be spiritual baptism because the baptism is *into Christ*. Colossians 2:11-13 makes it crystal clear these passages are talking about something spiritual, and not due to human hands (since the circumcision mentioned is spiritual, so, too, is the baptism). Spiritual baptism is very distinct from water baptism, and the two should not be confused since the former is an essential part of our salvation.

The Spirit's action of placing us into Christ identifies us with Him. We are so closely identified with Him that we become members of His body. We are made one with Him; His death, burial, resurrection, position in heaven, and so forth, become ours. Spiritual baptism is what cup C (above) represents. At the same time of this real (but unseen) baptism, we are filled with the fullness of Christ, cup D. All He is (His fullness) becomes ours. When God looks at us, He sees Christ, not our old sinful self. We become a new creation through this baptism identifying us with Him.

Identification is taught in the Bible in many ways (several are shown in *Types of Baptism* above). The Passover is a perfect example of identification by the application of blood to the doorway. Another example is Christ, Who had to die because He was identified with our sins; this was the baptism of death in Matthew

¹Baker, Charles; *A Dispensational Theology*; Grace Bible College Publication; Grand Rapids, MI 49509; second edition; 1972.

20:22-23. We become righteous when we are identified with Him (our spiritual baptism). **"For He (God) made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"** (2 Cor. 5:21, parenthesis added).

An interesting point regarding being in Christ is the fact believers were first called "Christians" in Acts 11:26. The word Christian was used at that time to describe those who had the new *in Christ* relationship, and this occurred just as the Age of Grace began. The use of the word Christian is evidence of a new relationship with God in our Age.

Remember, a Christian is a "Christ-in-person;" I am in Him and He is in me.

TAKE TO HEART

Summary

There are many types of baptism in the Bible, most of which do not have any connection with water. Spiritual baptism is a non-water baptism performed by the Holy Spirit the moment a person believes in Christ. Spiritual baptism is very important, and since it is spiritual it is unseen and unfelt. Thus, neither you nor anyone else will experience something physically happening when this baptism occurs, just as no one can see or feel your salvation. The main thing to remember with all baptisms is they accomplish something important—they identify one thing with another. In the case of spiritual baptism, the believer is the *thing* that is identified with *another*, Christ. A piece of cloth put in dye (baptized) becomes identified with the dye; that is, it has the identical color as the dye. Similarly, when we are baptized into Christ, we take on His identity; we become one with Him. We are in Him and He is in us. This is what being saved means: *being in Christ*.

Gospel

"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" (1 Cor. 12:13). Just as the blood of the Passover lamb, smeared on the doorway, saved the firstborn of that house from death, so, too, the blood of God's perfect Lamb (Christ) delivers us from eternal death. Christ is the perfect Lamb of God; as such, spiritual death will pass over us and we will have eternal life in heaven if we are identified with Him. When we first believe in Christ, the Spirit baptizes us into Christ's body, meaning we become identified with Him. We are so closely identified with Him that we become members of His body.

Encouragement

Thank you for believing the Bible, even when it is hard to understand or others make fun of you. You may be ridiculed or treated wrongly for your faith; however, knowing you are one with Christ is very comforting. It is encouraging to understand that a believer is identified with Christ and God is watching over that person very closely. You will never be forgotten, given-up on, or considered anything but a loved son or daughter. You will always be the center of God's interest, and His desire is to bless you. We praise the Lord for those who are struggling in this life, but living by faith.