

Baptized Into Christ

By David Feddes

When you read the New Testament, you read about a lot of baptisms, and there is a reason for that. Jesus himself commissioned his first disciples to make disciples and baptize. He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18–20).

When Jesus gave that command, the apostles went out. Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, and he said, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38–39). Three thousand people were baptized in that one day. We are not up to three thousand, but we rejoice that seven people are being baptized today.

As you keep reading in the book of Acts, you read of an Ethiopian official of the treasury who is told the word of God while he is in his chariot. He believes in the Lord Jesus, and he says, “Look, here is water. Why shouldn’t I be baptized?” (Acts 8:36). Philip says nothing is preventing it, and he baptizes him right then and there.

When the apostle Paul, formerly the vicious killer Saul, is converted, Ananias is sent to him to restore his sight, but also to have him baptized. Ananias lays his hands on Saul and says, “Brother Saul, receive your sight” (Acts 9:17). His sight comes back, and then Ananias says, “And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16).

Later on, there is a jailer who is suicidal because he thinks all the prisoners have gotten away. Paul and Silas are there, and the jailer says to them, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They reply, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:30–31). That very night, he and his whole household are baptized (Acts 16:33).

Baptism is something that happens again and again and again in the New Testament, and it has been happening again and again for the last two thousand years. We want to think this morning, before these baptisms, about what baptism is and about the meaning of this wonderful event that God gives us.

Sign and seal

Baptism is a sign and a seal. It is a sign, which means it is a visible, physical picture of invisible, spiritual facts. In baptism we are acting something out physically that is revealing some wonderful things about what God is doing, and we will say more about that. It is a sign, or a picture, or a symbol.

Baptism is also a seal. A seal makes something official. In a sense, a seal does not add much information, because if you have a whole document, it has everything spelled out there. The promises of the gospel spell everything out. Baptism doesn't add more promises to the gospel. Yet when a stamp is put on a document or a signature is put to it, that makes it even more official and confirms it, taking all of those promises and sealing them. In one sense, baptism does not add anything. It is all about the Lord Jesus Christ and the cleansing and the new life that he brings. In another sense, it is the way God has given us to make it official, to show the sign and seal of God's promises to us. Above all, it is a sign and a seal of being baptized into Christ.

Galatians 3:26–29 says, “In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise” (Galatians 3:26-29).

We are going to focus on a number of things about being baptized into Christ.

Baptized Into Christ

- One with Christ by believing
- Dunked in death, raised to life
- Stripped, cleansed, clothed
- God's children and heirs
- One in Christ with all believers

First, when you are baptized into Christ, you are one with Jesus through faith. You are one with him through believing.

When you are baptized, you are dunked down into death and you are raised up to life.

When you are baptized, you are stripped, you are cleansed, and then you are reclothed. We will not enact that part physically, but the Bible uses that language. Sometimes, in older times of baptism, people would put on different clothes afterward. Even today, after the baptism, people will put on different clothes to replace the drenched clothes. That is a picture of what happens when an old way of life is stripped away from you. You are cleaned up by Jesus, and then you are clothed in his goodness and his righteousness.

When you are baptized, it is a sign that you are God's children and heirs. It says that those who are baptized into Christ are sons of God, children of God, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Another part of baptism is that you are made one with all other believers. You do not say, “Those are males over there and I am female, so we are so different that we have nothing in common,” or, “Those people are of one nationality, and I am of a different nationality, so the nationality we were born into separates us.” Not so. All of that becomes irrelevant compared to the importance of belonging to Jesus Christ, and you become one with all people who are believers in Jesus.

One With Christ

First of all, baptism marks us as one with Christ. When we think of being in union with Jesus, there is a legal side to it, a legal union where Jesus represents us. He is our legal head. He acts on our behalf, and what he does is counted by God as ours. The president of a nation acts on behalf of that nation. The mayor of a village acts on behalf of that village. The actions they take legally involve those for whom they are representatives. There is this legal union that we have with Jesus, and when he does things on our behalf, it is counted as ours.

Not only that, there is a living union. Jesus lives in us, and we live in him through a living connection. He is our living head. We are his body, and his actions affect us. His actions direct our experience. His death and his resurrection and his reign overflow into our lives. When we think about being one with Christ, there is a legal side to it, a legal union with him, but also a living union where he lives in us and we in him. Baptism is a picture of becoming one with the Lord Jesus Christ.

“In the ark only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:20-21). At first this sounds like baptism saves you. Then it immediately says it is not like washing away dirt from your body. It is not the physical water that saves you. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In the time of Noah, the whole world was wicked and violent and horrible, and the waters of judgment came upon that world. If you were in the ark, you survived those waters of judgment. If you were outside the ark, you did not. That is a reminder of what happens with Jesus. If we are in Christ, we pass through the waters of judgment and come out alive into a different world. That old world was drowned, and a new world was there for those who came back out of the ark. When we are in Christ, we emerge into a new world. The Bible says, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The old has been submerged in those waters, a new world has come out, and you are part of a new world.

Consider a different story from the Old Testament that is again linked with baptism in the New, “They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Corinthians 10:2). The people of Israel are trapped on the shore of the Red Sea, and Pharaoh and all his armies are there, ready to kill them. Then the Lord opens a way through the sea, and they walk through the sea on dry ground. After they are through the sea, the waters rush back in again and cover the pursuing armies of Pharaoh. “They were all *baptized into* Moses in the cloud and in the sea,” almost the same phrasing as Galatians 3, “*baptized into* Christ.” They were baptized into Moses when they went through that sea.

“They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:3–4). You read of water coming out of a rock and the people drinking from it. The New Testament says that was not only physical water. It was a picture that Christ was with them all along and that they were living on Christ. If they forsook Christ, their bodies dropped in the desert, and that is what

happened to so many. Despite being baptized into Moses, despite having the bread from heaven, the manna, that in itself did not mean they were automatically in great shape.

You can be baptized. You can come to the Lord's table. The waters of baptism and the bread and the cup at the Lord's table are not magic that work on people who do not trust in the Lord Jesus Christ or who reject him. This passage is a reminder that people who were baptized into Moses could still perish. It is a warning that your life is in Christ, not in a particular blessed ritual that Christ gives us, but in Christ. You cannot separate yourself from Christ and still say, "The baptism covers it." *Christ* covers it, and your participation in Christ is what baptism is a sign and seal of.

Passing through the waters of the flood, what happened? A whole old world was washed away. Passing through the waters of the Red Sea, a whole enemy army was washed away and left behind, and the people were brought out into new life. They were out of Egypt, but as you know, it was not always easy to get Egypt out of them. When you are baptized, you are brought out of the domain of darkness and brought into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. Make sure that once you have been removed from that world, not too much of that world still lingers in you. We are meant to leave that domain behind. Jesus has delivered us from the domain of darkness and the works of the devil, and that is one of the great things that baptism pictures.

We are one with Christ by believing, by trusting in him, by faith in him. It comes through faith, not simply through the ritual itself.

Dunked in death, raised to life

Another aspect of baptism is that we are dunked down into death and raised to life. It is a picture of dying and rising with Christ, because what happens to him happens to those who belong to him by faith. "Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead" (Colossians 2:12).

You remember the story of Jonah. Jonah was said by Jesus to be a picture of what would happen to Jesus himself: "A wicked generation asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah" (Matthew 12:39). What happened in the story of Jonah? He disobeyed God and sailed in the opposite direction God had told him to go. But the sea, at God's command, rose up against him. The only way that storm would be calmed was if the sailors threw Jonah overboard, so they did. Immediately the sea was calm. Jonah, meanwhile, was in the vast sea and was as good as dead, in the water of judgment. Then a great fish came and swallowed him.

Jonah prayed, "From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry. You brought my life up from the pit, O Lord my God... Salvation comes from the Lord" (Jonah 2:2, 6, 9). Jonah prayed to God from the depths of death and judgment, and God sent him back to life again. The fish brought him out of the waters of judgment and back onto land.

Jesus says that is a picture of what happens to him in his death. He enters into that watery realm of the grave and emerges again victorious from death. What happened in the life of Jonah is

another picture of baptism, passing through the waters of judgment and then being spared by God's mercy, saved and given life again.

When the Bible says that you are baptized, it reminds us again and again of the realities that ought to go with that. "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Romans 6:4). Baptism is about rising again to new life. "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11).

You are dead to the old realm and the demonic realm. The Bible says, "If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world do you submit to regulations?" (Colossians 2:20). When you have died to that realm, you must live to different powers, not the powers of the evil one, but the powers of Christ. Count yourself dead to sin, alive to God in Christ Jesus. Every time you think of your own baptism, realize again that you are dead to sin and alive to God because you are in Christ Jesus, and your baptism is God's sign of that. When you are baptized into Christ, you are one with him. You die with him and rise again.

Stripped, cleansed, clothed

In baptism you are stripped and cleansed and clothed. "The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14). The water of baptism stands for washing, and that washing comes through the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). He does that through the cleansing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not only is the water of baptism a picture of cleansing by Jesus' blood, it's also a picture of being washed by the Holy Spirit. "God saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior (Titus 3:4-6)

Again, baptismal water does not have any magical properties itself, but it is a picture. The Holy Spirit is often spoken of in the Bible as living water. When the Holy Spirit washes you, that takes it a step beyond what Jesus' blood does. Jesus' blood washes away our sin, our guilt, and the condemnation and punishment that would come upon us. The living water of the Holy Spirit also washes away our sins in our experience and purifies us, making us more and more the kind of people that God wants us to be. The washing of regeneration is a sign of that birth that the Spirit gives, of the renewal of the new life.

Each of us needs to be cleansed. This water directs us to think of Jesus' precious blood and to think of the living water of the Holy Spirit as what cleanses us and makes us white as snow. As Ananias said to Saul so many years ago, "And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16). Rise! Saul was probably literally sitting down or on his knees when Ananias laid his hands on him, but there is also a powerful impact in that command, "Rise, be baptized." You rise with Christ.

“Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22). That is a beautiful way of phrasing it. There is an inner cleansing, and it is pictured by our bodies being washed with that pure water. The whole point of it is that we are baptized into Christ and therefore have our sins washed away.

When do you take a shower or a bath? You do not do that because you are already pristine and pure and clean. When you ask for baptism, you are not saying, “I think I am ready for baptism now. I am a pretty good all-around person, and I think I have reached one of the upper echelons of being like Jesus, and now I am finally ready for that next step.” Baptism is a sign of dirty people getting cleaned up. It is a sign of what Jesus does.

Every time a person is baptized, it is a confession. It is first of all a confession that we need cleansing. We need the precious blood of Jesus to cover our sinfulness. We need the Holy Spirit to give us that new life. When he does, our guilty conscience does not have to be troubled anymore, because we are cleansed by Jesus and the Holy Spirit is working in us.

When we have been stripped and had all of that dirt and filth and the old clothes left behind, when we have been cleaned by Jesus’ blood, then we are clothed again. “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27) . You are putting on Jesus as your clothing. “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 13:14).

As a young man, Augustine of Hippo had been living a wicked life. He felt drawn to Christ and to a new way, but he kept putting it off, hitting the snooze alarm and saying, “Not yet. Not yet. Not yet.” Then he read this called in Romans 13 to leave behind the old way of life and put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and he received salvation.

Colossians 3 puts it this way. “You have put off the old self [*anthropos*: man] with its practices, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator” (Colossians 3:9-10). Your clothing is the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism is the sign of being cleaned and clothed by Jesus, and what a blessing that is.

Some of you may know the Old Testament story of Naaman. Naaman was the general of the army of a foreign power, the nation of Aram (Syria). He had a terrible affliction, leprosy, and he did not know how to get rid of it. He heard that there was a prophet in Israel, the prophet Elisha, so he rode down there in his chariot, and went to Elisha with his entourage. You know how all the big shots always have an entourage. He had a really big entourage because he was a general, one of the big shots, and he expected to be received with the red carpet and all the things that go with being a big shot.

When he got to Elisha’s place, Elisha did not come to the door. He sent a servant boy out to talk to Naaman, and the servant said, “Go jump in the Jordan River seven times.” That was as insulting as being told to go jump in a lake. Here is the grand general with all his entourage, all his important people with him, and Elisha will not even talk to him. He just sends a kid out to tell him to go jump. Naaman says, “We have better rivers than that where I come from. If all it took

was swimming in a river, we have better rivers.” Naaman makes a U-turn in his chariot and starts heading back toward Aram.

Some of the people with him say, “Come on, sir. What have you got to lose? You traveled all this way. You have leprosy.” So he goes over to the Jordan River and goes in and out of it seven times. He is under those waters again and again, and the people are waiting for him to come out. When he comes out the seventh time, he has been cleansed. The leprosy is gone.

When we think of that wonderful miracle of cleansing that God brought about, there is one level at which you might say, “I do not understand that. Why would faith in Jesus make me clean? What good is that? Baptism is supposed to be a picture of cleansing, but how could somebody who lived long ago on earth, died, and rose again ever make me clean?” You can keep asking that if you want. You can be like Naaman and wish you had been given something impressive to do instead of being told to submit to this washing. But if you can't escape sin and death, what do you have to lose? Go to Jesus.

You might find that if you humble yourself and stop thinking of yourself as the great big shot, and instead think of yourself as the sick person who really needs help, that help will be there. As we come to baptism again today, we may not understand exactly how God accomplishes these amazing things through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, but he promises that he does. Naaman believed the word of God through the prophet, submitted to God's way, and was made clean.

When we believe the word of the gospel, the promise that if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved, then God brings about that wonderful cleansing. We are one with Christ. We die and rise with him. We are stripped and cleansed and clothed in his righteousness, and we become God's children and his heirs.

God's children and heirs

That is an amazing thing. “In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith... And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise... Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father” (Galatians 3:26, 29; 4:6). *Sons* of God is not a sexist term, because in the same passage it talks about male and female making no difference to our status in Christ. Sons of God are those who have the special privileges that were given to the oldest son and who share those privileges with Christ. They are the heirs of Christ. They reign with Christ. God made wonderful promises to Abraham, that he would inherit the whole earth and be a blessing to all nations. Now, in Christ, you are the children of Abraham, but better than that, the children of God. You are sons of God through faith, his Spirit lives in your heart and calls out to the Father. What an amazing thing it is to be a child of God, sharing in the rights and privileges of the eternal Son of God! You are a child of the Creator and King of the universe, and you are his heir, which means that what belongs to him belongs to you as well. The Bible promises that in the future we will sit with Christ on his throne. To be God's children and heirs is one of the great things that baptism pictures.

One with all believers

Baptism also marks you as one with all believers. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). It does not matter what nation you are in. It does not matter what your job status is. If you are as low as a slave, you are still one with everybody else in Christ Jesus, and you are not lower or less important in God’s eyes than they are. If you are important, free, and powerful, that does not mean you are greater than everybody else. As the apostle James says, the rich man ought to take pride in his low position and the one who is poor should take pride in his high position (James 1:9-10). It does not matter whether you are important or unimportant in the eyes of the world, because in Christ you are one.

When that water of judgment washes away the demons and the sins, that water of judgment also washes away the things we think are so important and that separate us from each other, and it brings a people together as one in the Lord Jesus Christ. “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Think about that last statement for a moment: "We were all given the one Spirit to drink" when we were baptized. What is water all about? We have already seen that it can drown. It can drown an old world so that you emerge into a new one. Another thing water does is cleanse and make pure. Another thing water does is give life. Plants have to have water to live. We have to have water to live. We are all given one Spirit to drink. Jesus said, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. He was speaking of the Holy Spirit, whom he would give to those who believe in him (John 7:37-39).

Baptismal water reminds us not only of cleansing, but also of where our life comes from, where our living water comes from. Our oneness with all believers reminds us that if they are washed in Jesus’ blood, if they have the living water of the Holy Spirit in them, what could be more important than that? We may be different in this or that, but the Holy Spirit lives in them. The life of God is in them. The Son of God loved them and gave himself for them, just as he did for me. No matter how I differ from others, there is nothing bigger than what unites believers who are baptized into Christ. Baptism washes away the walls of separation and the differences among those who truly belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Those are some of the realities of being baptized into Christ: being one with Christ through faith in him; being dunked into death and raised to life; being stripped, cleansed, and clothed; being God’s children and heirs, a sign of being a member of his family; and then, as a member of his family, remembering who else is in the family. You are not God’s only family member, but people of all kinds of nations, all kinds of wealth and status levels, male and female, all are one in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have already been baptized, praise God for these wonderful realities that were signed and sealed to you in your baptism. If you are about to be baptized, praise God for what you are about to receive from him, the seal of all these wondrous, amazing realities that are ours through faith in Jesus Christ.

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Sign and seal

- **Sign:** visible, physical picture of invisible, spiritual facts
- **Seal:** confirms gospel promises and officially marks each member of God's family

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One With Christ

- **Legal union:** Jesus represents us. He is our legal head. He acts on our behalf. What he does is counted by God as ours.
- **Living union:** Jesus lives in us and we in him through a living connection. He is our living head, and we are his body. His actions affect and direct our experience. His death, resurrection, and reign flow into our lives.

Flood of baptism

In the ark only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 3:20-21)

Baptized in the sea

They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. (1 Corinthians 10:2-4)

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Dunked in death, raised to life

... having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. (Colossians 2:12)

From the depths of the grave I called for help... you brought my life up from the pit, O LORD my God... Salvation comes from the LORD. (Jonah 2)

Live your baptism!

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life... In the same way, **count yourselves** dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6:4,11)

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Washed in Jesus' blood

The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:14)

Washed by the Spirit

He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior (Titus 3:4-6)

Washing away sins

“And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.” (Acts 22:16)

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (Heb 10:22)

Stripped, cleansed, clothed

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (Galatians 3:27)

Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom 13:14)

You have put off the old self [*anthropos*: man] with its practices, and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator. (Colossians 3:9-10)

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One with all believers

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We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. (1 Cor 12:13)