

Baptism: Death, Burial, and Resurrection

Joe Slater

For whatever reasons, religious people disagree on just about everything having to do with baptism. Confusion reigns, indicating that Satan has done his homework well (while we, perhaps, have been preoccupied with more “sophisticated” matters). Just what does the Bible say on the subject? In his letters to Rome and Colosse, Paul taught that in baptism, we identify with, and receive the benefits of, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Sin makes us spiritually dead. *“The wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23). Before becoming Christians, the Colossians had been *“dead in (their) trespasses”* (Colossians 2:13). Though alive physically, they were separated from God by their sins.

As they obeyed the gospel of Jesus, however, they were *“buried with Him in baptism”* (2:12). Just as Jesus, having died, was buried in Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb, so these who were dead in sin were buried as they were plunged under the water.

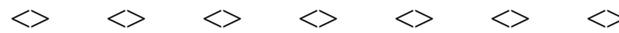
Romans 6:4 gives an additional detail – they were *“buried with Him through baptism **into death.**”* Yes, they were baptized into death. But wait! Didn’t we just read that they were already **dead in sin** before baptism? Why, then, were they baptized **into death**? Because the death into which they were baptized was a **death to sin** (see Romans 6:2). That is, in baptism they terminated their relationship with sin. So remember: before baptism, they were dead in sin; while buried in baptism they died to sin.

Thus far we have seen baptism’s identity with Jesus’ death and burial. What about the resurrection? Romans 6:4 says *“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.” Likewise, Colossians 2:12, after speaking of baptism as a burial, says that *“you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead.”* Just as Jesus came forth from the tomb, triumphant over sin and death, so we come forth from baptism cleansed from sin by His blood, alive from the dead (spiritually), not by our own merit, but by faith in the working of God.

Is baptism essential? It is only as essential as dying to sin; only as necessary as being raised with Jesus to live a new life; only as indispensable as identifying with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Maybe I’m naive, but I really don’t understand what all the controversy is about.



Darwin versus Design

When Darwin’s model of natural selection became popular after 1859, evolutionists combined it with Linnaeus’ system and developed evolutionary trees to define the “real path of evolution.” Unfortunately, it was all conjecture – speculation based on the assumption that creatures with common body parts had a common ancestor. And it remains speculation today.

Think logically for a minute. Just because bats, chickens, dogs, and people all have elbows – does that truly imply that we came from the same ancestor? Isn’t it more likely that a designer decided, so to speak, that “elbows work”? Might not such a designer decide to apply them to several basic types of mechanisms? For instance, a human design engineer might say, “Let’s apply wheels to roller skates, bicycles, and cars – that system works for all those things.”

Sometimes we make simple things too complex!

-- Ralph Muncaster (Dismantling Evolution, 66-67)

Reclining, Whining, or Shining?

It seems to me that there are three kind of church members. Let’s briefly examine each; and, as we do so, please honestly examine your part in the church and see which you are:

There are those who recline. They just sit back and watch everything going on around them. They are never more involved than just “warming the pew” from time to time. God wants us involved with the church because, *“He who is slothful in his work is a brother to him who is a great destroyer”* (Proverbs 18:9).

There are those who whine. Sadly, some church members are active only by being involved with other members’ business. They seem to spend the majority of their time and resources complaining. God wants us to focus on harmony and making certain we *“do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned”* (James 5:9).

There are those who shine. Fortunately, there are church members who possess a great attitude and are working heartily for the Lord. They are busy doing the Lord’s will and singing along the way. They are shimmering examples of faithfulness and fruitfulness. *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16).

Paul had instructions concerning all of these in Philippians 2:14-15. *“Do all things* (that’s the opposite of reclining) *without complaining or disputing* (that is, without whining), *that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world* (that’s being a shining example).”

So, Christian, are you reclining, whining, or shining?

Edd Sterchi (Campbellsville, KY)