

### **“Born Again” (3)**

For the last two weeks, my articles in the *NEWSLETTER* have dealt with being “born again.” In much of the denominational world, being born again doesn’t have anything to do with baptism. However, I believe the Scripture tells a totally different story. Two weeks ago, we examined what Jesus told Nicodemus in **John 3** about being born again. He was to be “born of water and the Spirit.” (John 3:5) Jesus’ apostles were to make disciples by baptizing those who, through faith, responded to their preaching. (**Mark 16:15-16**, **Matthew 28:19-20**) We looked at Paul’s own account of answering Ananias’ command to get up and be baptized. What was the effect of baptism? Ananias said to Saul that it would “wash his sins away.” (**Acts 22:16**)

Last week, we examined several instances of conversion from the Book of Acts. All involved baptism as essential for completing one’s faith. The people on Pentecost (**Acts 2**), the people of Samaria (**Acts 8**), the Ethiopian official (**Acts 8**), Lydia (**Acts 16**), the Philippian jailer (**Acts 16**), Crispus and many Corinthians (**Acts 18**), and John’s disciples (**Acts 19**) – ALL were baptized as an outward indication of an inward faith.

In Paul’s and Peter’s letters, baptism is compared to a number of things. Paul wrote this to the Romans in **Romans 6:1-4**:

***“What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 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.”***

Baptism is the burial of the old, sinful person and the birth of a new creation, determined to live his or her life for God. This simply cannot be accomplished without baptism.

In **Galatians 3:26-27**, Paul says:

***“So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”***

Paul says that baptism is the means by which we “clothe” ourselves with Christ. Our faith, mentioned in **verse 26**, leads us to be baptized.

To the people of Colossae, Paul said in **Colossians 2:11-12**:

***“In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self, ruled by the flesh, was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.”***

Just as circumcision was evidence that the Hebrew race, descendants of Abraham, were

in a covenant relationship with God, baptism is the Christian's circumcision that has a cleansing effect on the heart and makes one a child of God, burying the sinful man to be raised God's child.

The Scripture is plain and needs no spin or interpretation: Baptism is commanded and necessary for one to be saved. It is proof of our faith. It is a cleansing process. It is a death, a burial, and a new birth. It cleans the heart and makes us God's child. And as Peter says in **1 Peter 3:21**, it is the ***“answer of a good conscience toward God”*** and it SAVES us from a sinful life, just as the flood saved Noah from a sinful world.

---Johnny Stephens