

# You Must Be Born Again

## (John 3:1-12)

Expository Lessons from the Gospel of John

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### I. Introduction to John 3

- a. This chapter features two of the best-known verses in the Bible (unfortunately, often misunderstood or misapplied):
  - i. **John 3:3** - "You must be 'born again'..." (which we will address in this lesson); and
  - ii. **John 3:16** - "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (We hope to cover that in our next lesson.)

### II. Nicodemus the Teacher is Stumped by Jesus Saying He Must Be "Born Again"

- a. Read **John 3:1-12**
- b. Storyline:
  - i. Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night; persuaded by miraculous signs that Jesus was sent by God. (Wedding at Cana, perhaps other miracles?)
  - ii. Jesus then gets into a discussion where Nicodemus is clearly puzzled, about the need to be "born again".
  - iii. Jesus often spoke in riddles, using a play on words or double meanings that force truth seekers to dig deeper to discern the real meaning. We saw an example of this in **John 2:19** when Jesus said, "Destroy this *temple* and in three days I will raise it up." (Referring not to the building, but to his body.)
- c. What do we know about Nicodemus?
  - i. He seems to be a truth-seeker
  - ii. He is an important and respected religious leader. Jesus refers to him as being "the teacher of Israel".
  - iii. He comes to Jesus at night, perhaps suggesting that he does not want others to know he is seeking out Jesus, a controversial figure.
  - iv. Later, in **John 7**, we see Nicodemus trying to deflect the Pharisees criticism of Jesus. Nicodemus ends up getting insulted for that.

1. “Then the Pharisees answered [the officers who praised Jesus’ speech], ‘Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.’ Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, ‘Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?’ They answered and said to him, ‘Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.” (**John 7:47–52, NKJV**)
- v. Nicodemus, along with Joseph of Arimathea, attended to burying the body of Jesus after He was taken down from the cross.
  1. “After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews’ Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.” (**John 19:38–42, NKJV**)
- vi. While Nicodemus may have been cautious, it seems clear that he obviously cared for Jesus, stepping forward even at a time when it appeared that Jesus was dead and defeated.
- d. What is this about being “born again”?
  - i. The Greek word (ἀνωθεν) generally translated “*again*” here in “born-*again*” can also be translated “*from above*”. You will find most modern translations rendering this “born again”; yet some others render it “born from above” or even “born again from above”. Also, some Bible translations provide a footnote acknowledging that it can be understood either way.
    1. “Nicodemus said to Him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’” (**John 3:4, NKJV**)
      - a. This reference to “a second time” suggests that “*born again*” could be the best rendering here.
    2. “If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?” (**John 3:12, NKJV**)

- a. This reference, contrasting “earthly things” to “heavenly things” may suggest that “born *from above*” could be an appropriate translation.
3. Perhaps Jesus is using a play on words, alluding to both senses of the word ἄνωθεν (first, meaning “*born again*”; then later as “*born from above*”).
  - a. Note that in this discussion with Nicodemus Jesus also uses a play on words regarding “wind/Spirit” in **John 3:5-8**. The Greek word used πνεῦμα (from which we get our English word ‘pneumatic’) can mean either *wind* or *spirit* (even referring to the Holy Spirit). Therefore, when translating into English, the translators can only determine what is meant from context.
- ii. What does it mean to be “born-again”? First, let’s look at the typical view in the US today, especially in the evangelical Protestant world, and among those influenced by it.
  1. According to a survey done by LifeWay Research and reported in 2017 by Christianity Today, 29% of Americans identify themselves as “born again”.
  2. The late Billy Graham was perhaps the most popular evangelical preacher in the US in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is claimed that he personally preached the gospel to more people, in-person, than any man in history (through stadium-filling ‘crusades’ and gospel meetings). Once he was asked the question, “What does it mean to be ‘*born again*’”? His response, representative of what many evangelical Christians would say, was as follows:
    - a. “A born-again Christian is someone who has repented of their sins and turned to Christ for their salvation, and as a result has become part of God’s family forever. All this takes place as God’s Spirit works in our lives.”
    - b. Graham continued, then concluded with this appeal: “My prayer is that you too may be born again and become part of God’s family. By a simple prayer of faith, tell God that you know you are a sinner, and you are sorry for your sins. Then ask Christ to come into your life and save you. When you do, God will come to live within you by His Spirit, and you will be born again.”
    - c. In summary, according to Billy Graham, being born again is a *spiritual rebirth* that happens when a person:
      - i. Admits he (or she) is a sinner;

- ii. Expresses sorrow for, and repents of, his (or her) sins; and
  - iii. Says a prayer, asking Jesus to come into his or her life (or heart).
- iii. On the other hand, let's roll back the clock 1800-1900 years, and consider how the same question, "What does it mean to be born again?", would have been answered *in the early church*. We can do this by reading the writings of early Christians from the first two centuries.
1. Justin Martyr, a former philosopher from Samaria who became a Christian evangelist, explained the Christian faith to the Roman authorities in his *First Apology* (writing around the year 160 AD, not long after the death of the apostle John, c. 100 AD). In chapter 61 of that work Justin wrote:
  2. "I will also relate the manner in which we dedicated ourselves to God when we had been made new through Christ; lest, if we omit this, we seem to be unfair in the explanation we are making. As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we praying and fasting with them.
  3. "Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, 'Unless you be born again, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' (**John 3:3**) Now, that it is impossible for those who have once been born to enter into their mothers' wombs, is manifest to all.
  4. "And how those who have sinned and repent shall escape their sins, is declared by Isaiah the prophet, as I wrote above; he thus speaks: 'Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from your souls; learn to do well; judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow: and come and let us reason together, says the Lord. And though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them white like wool; and though they be as crimson, I will make them white as snow. But if ye refuse and rebel, the sword shall devour you: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.' (**Isaiah 1:16-20**, LXX)
  5. "And for this [rite] we have learned from the apostles this reason. Since at our birth we were born without our own

knowledge or choice, by our parents coming together, and were brought up in bad habits and wicked training; in order that we may not remain the children of necessity and of ignorance, but may become the children of choice and knowledge, and may obtain in the water the remission of sins formerly committed, there is pronounced over *him who chooses to be born again*, and has repented of his sins, **the name of God the Father** and Lord of the universe; he who leads to the laver the person that is to be washed calling him by this name alone. (For no one can utter the name of the ineffable God; and if any one dare to say that there is a name, he raves with a hopeless madness.) And this washing is called illumination, because they who learn these things are illuminated in their understandings. **And in the name of Jesus Christ**, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and **in the name of the Holy Spirit**, who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus, he who is illuminated is washed.”  
**(Matthew 28:19)**

6. (Source: Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin*. In Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 183.)
  - a. To summarize the points made by Justin:
    - i. Being born again of water and the spirit is a spiritual rebirth that happens when someone who is ready to become a Christian is baptized (immersed) in water.
    - ii. This was taught by the apostles and handed down by Jesus Himself in **John 3:3-5** when He said, “...unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”
    - iii. Baptism, as the means through which God’s grace comes to us and we are regenerated, was prophesied by Isaiah in **Isaiah 1:16-20** which says, “wash yourselves, make yourselves clean.”
    - iv. While we had no choosing in our first birth, in contrast this spiritual rebirth is the result of our own voluntary decision. It is made by someone who has been persuaded to believe the gospel message (has faith), and who has repented of his sins. (This is the problem with infant baptism: a baby is not able to make its own decision to follow Jesus. It is not able to have saving faith; neither can it repent.)

- v. The candidate is taken to a place where there is water, and baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (as Jesus instructed in **Matthew 28:19**).
  - vi. Through this process (involving faith, repentance and baptism in water), the candidate receives the remission of past sins, and is “born again”.
  - vii. This is a universal practice among all Christians; Justin became a Christian in this manner, as well.
- b. *It is not just Justin Martyr.* This is how *all* the early Christian writers (except groups that we would all consider heretical, such as the Gnostics) understood what Jesus was saying in **John 3:3-5** regarding being born again of water and the spirit. They all equated it with Christian water baptism. If you have questions and want to check this out for yourself, consider the following:
- i. *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, ed. by David Bercot, article on Baptism referencing dozens of quotes from early Christian writers.
  - ii. Audio lesson by David Bercot, *What the Early Christians Believed About Baptism*
  - iii. You can do your own study in the Ante-Nicene Fathers (collection of Christian writings before 325 AD), using the index in that series to find all the places where they talk about *baptism*. Or you can use the index to find all the places in their writings where **John 3:3-5** is referenced.
- iv. The apostles and early Christian writers also saw foreshadowings of Christian baptism in the Old Testament stories.
1. Consider what Peter says regarding the Flood of Noah.
    - a. “by whom also He [*Jesus -CP*] went and preached to the spirits in prison [*referring to Hades -CP*], who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” (**1 Peter 3:19-21**, NKJV)

- i. Peter uses the word “*antitype*” here. The meaning of this term can be understood if we consider an old-fashioned typewriter or printing press. The “type” in that case is the metal letter form. It impresses its image onto the paper, the resulting letter being the corresponding “antitype”.
  - ii. So the water of the flood was the “type” that cast the image of the “antitype” that followed (namely baptism), which Peter says *now saves us!*
  - iii. Only a few were saved “through water” back then, foreshadowing Christian baptism saving a few amid the depraved world today.
2. Consider what Paul said regarding the Exodus crossing of the Red Sea.
- a. “Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.” (**1 Corinthians 10:1-5**, NKJV)
  - b. Here Paul is teaching about the importance of persevering in the faith and staying out of sin if we want to make it to the Promised Land (heaven). He points to the example of the Exodus story as foreshadowing the Christian life.
    - i. They all were “*baptized into Moses* in the cloud and the sea”
      1. The cloud he refers to is the pillar of fire and cloud that led them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea. Then it led them on their trek through the Wilderness. They encamped around it. It first appeared at the end of **Exodus 13**, right after the Passover Lamb is slain. It shows the people where to go.
      2. Seems clear to me that this pillar of cloud and fire represents the Holy Spirit that now accompanies us. The Comforter that

Jesus said would come to lead and guide the church after He departed. (**John 14:16-18**)

3. Recall that the only way out of Egypt was passing through the sea; with a wall of water on each side. So when Paul says they were all “baptized into Moses, in the cloud and the Sea”, as foreshadowing the Christian life, he is pointing to our own baptism, a rebirth of “water and spirit”.
- c. Tertullian (Christian writer from Carthage, in North Africa) wrote about this connection in a work entitled *On Baptism* (c. 198 AD):
  - i. “First, indeed, when the people, set unconditionally free, escaped the violence of the Egyptian king by crossing over through water, it was water that extinguished the king himself, with his entire forces. What figure more manifestly fulfilled in the sacrament of baptism? The nations are set free from the world by means of water, to wit: and the devil, their old tyrant, they leave quite behind, overwhelmed in the water.” (Source: Tertullian, *On Baptism*. In ANF vol. 3, p. 673).
  - ii. Pharaoh and his forces were destroyed by water, in the Red Sea. This is a powerful image of what happens in Christian baptism: Satan and his forces (their hold over our lives) are destroyed in the water.
3. Consider also the story of the miraculous healing of Naaman’s leprosy. Some early Christian writers pointed to as a foreshadowing of the cleansing that would come to us through faith, water and obedience.
  - a. Read **2 Kings 5:1-14**
  - b. The prophet Elisha learns of Naaman’s leprosy and sends clear instruction telling Naaman what to do: dip in the river Jordan seven times to be healed of his leprosy. It is simple; yet Naaman gets angry and does not want to do it. Why?
  - c. This was *not* what Naaman had in mind. He envisioned the whole thing differently (personal encounter, special



prayer, and perhaps a laying-on-hands type of experience). (**2 Kings 5:11-12**)

- d. His servants give him good advice: If you want to be healed, just do what the prophet says!
- e. Fortunately, Naaman humbles himself and obeys the prophet's instruction, dips himself seven times in the Jordan River, and is miraculously healed. His flesh is restored to be like that of a young child.
- f. Commenting on this story, Irenaeus (bishop in Lyon, modern-day France, c. 180 AD) wrote,
  - i. "'And dipped himself,' says [the Scripture], 'seven times in Jordan.' It was not for nothing that Naaman of old, when suffering from leprosy, was purified upon his being baptized, but [it served] as an indication to us. For as we are lepers in sin, we are made clean, by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord, from our old transgressions; being spiritually regenerated as new-born babes, even as the Lord has declared: 'Except a man be born again through water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'"
  - ii. (Source: Irenaeus of Lyons, *Fragments*, chapter 34; In ANF vol. 1, p. 574.)
- g. **Question:** Was Naaman cured *by faith*, or *by works*?
  - i. **Answer:** He was *cured by his faith in God*, demonstrated (and made complete) through his obedience.
- v. What does "the Prophet" tell *us* to do, in the New Testament, if we are to be cleansed of *our own* "spiritual leprosy"?
  1. After Jesus rose from the dead and met with the apostles, he directed them to wait in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high (fulfilled at Pentecost in **Acts 2**). Then, *starting from Jerusalem*, "the message of repentance and remission of sins" would be "preached to all nations" (**Luke 24:46-49**).
  2. The message is preached starting in Jerusalem, on the Day of Pentecost, by Peter. In **Acts 2**, the Holy Spirit descends with power, and Peter preaches Jesus as the Christ, crucified and resurrected in fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament.

3. Peter concludes his speech powerfully (Read **Acts 2:36-41**)
- a. “This promise is to you, your children and to all afar off, *as many as the Lord our God will call.*”
  - b. Peter presents a *universal promise*, for all time. What is that promise?
    - i. If we who believe repent and are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, we will receive forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit.
  - c. **Question:** How did people respond when they heard the gospel message? (**Answer:** Like Naaman, they obeyed in faith, and did exactly what the man of God them to do.)
    - i. Tertullian wrote (c. 198 AD) in *On Baptism*, “Unless a man has been born again of water and Spirit, he will not enter into the kingdom of the heavens.’ (**John 3:5**) These words have tied faith to the necessity of baptism. Accordingly, all thereafter who became believers were baptized. So it was, too, that Paul, when he believed, was baptized.” (Tertullian, *On Baptism*, ANF vol. 3, p. 676).
    - ii. Let’s consider the examples that Tertullian is referring to, namely the early conversions we see in the **Book of Acts**:
      1. 3,000 baptized in **Acts 2:40-41**
      2. Samaritan men and women, plus Simon the sorcerer in **Acts 8:11-13**
      3. Ethiopian eunuch baptized in **Acts 8:26-39**
      4. Saul/ Paul in **Acts 9:1-18**
      5. Cornelius and household baptized immediately in **Acts 10:44-48** after clear indication from God (the ‘Gentile Pentecost’) that uncircumcised believers acceptable to God.
      6. Philippian jailer and family in **Acts 16:25-34**, baptized in middle of the night
      7. Paul recounts his own conversion. (Read **Acts 22:6-16**)

- a. After an encounter with Jesus and three days of praying and fasting, were Paul's sins forgiven? Was he saved? Did he need to be baptized to be saved?
  - b. The obvious answer: Yes, the apostle Paul had to be baptized to have his sins washed away, to be saved.
- vi. How many people in the **Book of Acts** said the prayer that Billy Graham told his hearers to pray, in order to be "born again"?
  - 1. (An appropriate sound effect at this point: dead silence, or perhaps only the sound of *crickets!*)
  - 2. We can find *no examples* of people doing what Billy Graham said to do, anywhere in the **Book of Acts**!
- vii. Do we really think that the entire early church 'missed the boat' on how conversion takes place, and that instead *the modern evangelical Protestants* in the U.S. have it right today?
  - 1. No! This idea of simply saying a prayer to be saved is a modern invention; it has *no basis in Scripture*.
  - 2. In fact, the Bible is very clear on the purpose of baptism: Jesus taught plainly on this. We have the examples in the **Book of Acts**, it was prophesied and foreshadowed in the Old Testament, and we have the writings of the early church. All the evidence points to the same conclusion.

### III. Why Doesn't Everyone Believe This Today?

- a. Religious pride and stubbornness? (The old familiar attitude, "This is what I was taught, and *our group must be right.*")
- b. "But so-and-so is such a nice spiritual person, and they don't believe it. My church leaders are spiritual, God-led people and I trust them."
  - i. This type of excuse is simply putting our trust in *what men say over what is written in the word of God.*
  - ii. Can you imagine using this excuse with other unpopular teachings that your group may be following?
- c. Those who understand this teaching have done a very poor job of explaining it to others. Some examples:
  - i. Turning baptism into a mechanical thing, without acknowledging the power of God and his grace at work through baptism.

- ii. Arrogance and a sectarian spirit. (In some circles, the attitude that only those who have had the correct theological understanding of this particular doctrine are the only true Christians. Therefore, “you should leave *your* group and join *ours*.”)
  - iii. A terrible testimony/example to others. Christians who do understand the purpose of baptism may be blatantly ignoring other plain teachings found in Scripture (such as: non-resistance, the permanence of marriage, head covering, etc.). Therefore, they have no credibility in the eyes of other believers who are serious about following the kingdom teachings of Jesus yet misunderstanding the significance of baptism.
- d. Why can't we look at the teaching on baptism with the simple eyes of a child (taking Scriptures at face value, as we should with nonresistance, head covering, role of women, permanence of marriage, adornment, etc.)? Can't we use the same 'unfiltered glasses' that we read what the Scriptures say regarding these other counter-cultural teachings? One reason I think sincere believers who really do want to follow the Bible but struggle with the historic understanding of baptism: **it doesn't seem to fit with other things that they believe.**
- i. Some of this may be due to the influence of Reformation Theology, Protestant thinking, or an over-reaction against Roman Catholic teaching.
  - ii. To that, I respond with my own parable, which I call “*The Parable of the Jig-Saw Puzzle Piece that Won't Fit*”
    - 1. Imagine that you are trying to assemble a jig-saw puzzle. One piece that looks right just does not fit with the other pieces you already have in place. So what do you do? Try to jam it in, force-fitting, and it just does not work! What is the problem? I see *two possibilities*:
      - a. *EITHER* the piece you are trying to fit in is the wrong piece, *OR*...
      - b. The new piece is correct, however some of the *other pieces you had previously put in place* were not right!
  - iii. I believe that two essential pieces that are often “out of place” in the spiritual understanding of many people today (making the teaching on baptism “hard to fit in” are:
    - 1. How we understand “saving faith”; and
    - 2. What will happen to us (body and spirit) after we die.

- e. Biblical understanding of “saving faith”
- i. Very important to make sure we have the same understanding of “saving faith” as it is defined in the New Testament.
    1. Many believers can use same words and terms we do, namely “faith” and “saved by faith”, but with vastly different understanding. Before studying baptism, we need to make sure that this part of the spiritual foundation is correct.
    2. Many people, particularly Evangelicals and those influenced by them, define “faith” as simply “belief of one moment in time, even for just an instant”.
    3. True Biblical “saving faith” requires not only belief, but also obedient action, combined with perseverance over time. The righteous will *live by* faith (**Hebrews 10:38, Habakkuk 2:3-4**). *It is a way of life!*
  - ii. James reminds us, “even the demons believe” (See **James 2:14-26**)
  - iii. **Hebrews 11** defines saving faith by providing examples from the Old Testament.
    1. “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” (**Hebrews 11:7, NKJV**)
    2. “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.” (**Hebrews 11:8, NKJV**)
    3. “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,” (**Hebrews 11:17, NKJV**)
    4. “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.” (**Hebrews 11:30, NKJV**)
      - a. **Question:** Did the walls fall by faith or by works?
      - b. Would they have fallen if the people didn’t obey God and march around the city 7 times, blow trumpets, etc.?
      - c. Would the walls have fallen “by faith” if Joshua and the people decided instead of obeying the instructions, they would hold *a special prayer meeting* outside of Jericho? (I think we all know the answer; if not, please re-read the Scripture.)

- d. (If Joshua and his army took battering rams and tried to knock the walls of Jericho down by force, *that* would have been *by works!*)
  - iv. If you grasp what Biblical saving faith is (not just belief), the teaching on baptism will “fit” easily.
- f. Another important piece of the puzzle: God’s plan to save body and spirit of man, in the end.
  - i. A surprisingly common false belief among professing Christians is that God only plans to save our spirit (which they allege will go *straight to heaven* when we die, while our bodies will remain in the grave).
  - ii. However, this is not what Jesus and apostles taught. Rather, they taught that in the end, our body and spirit will be re-united, and they will be judged together on the Last Day.
    - 1. **John 5:28-29** – Jesus said that all in the grave (dead bodies) would come forth to face judgement at the end.
    - 2. **Matthew 5:27-30** – When Jesus taught about the dangers of lust, he warned that it would be better to enter life with one eye or missing a hand “than for your *whole body* to be cast into hell.”
    - 3. **1 Corinthians 15** – Paul devotes essentially this entire chapter to the resurrection of the body. Death and the grave will be utterly defeated in the end (**1 Corinthians 15:50-57**)
  - iii. God wants to save all of us: body and spirit. Death is to be left empty, with nothing. God’s plan is nothing short of the total redemption of man, which necessarily includes both body and spirit.
  - iv. The spirit and the flesh are linked together similar to a horse and carriage. They enter life as a team, sin as a team and will face judgement together as a team. They will face heaven or hell together. Therefore, body (as well as the spirit) must be involved in salvation process, since it too will be redeemed.
    - 1. Consider **Hebrews 10:22** in this light: “let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and *our bodies washed with pure water.*”
    - 2. Consider also what Paul says in **Romans 6:1-8**
      - a. Baptism is a participation in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.
      - b. Note that this is a conditional promise: “*If we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, certainly*

we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.”  
**(Romans 6:5)**

- c. In baptism, our bodies are buried under water, then raised up.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

- a. Baptism is central to the Christian faith.
  - i. Paul lists faith, repentance and baptism *as the first three* (of 6) “elementary principles or teachings of the faith, in **Hebrews 6:1-2**
  - ii. Paul expresses the unity of all Christians by reminding us that we all share, “one Lord, one faith, *one baptism*” (**Ephesians 4:1-6**)
- b. Our challenge: Let us humbly and respectfully work to show other believers the simple Christian faith. May the Lord bless our efforts to present the way of God more adequately to truth-seeking believers, to turn the tide and restore the ancient understanding and practice regarding being “born again”!