

Baptism – Sign of the New Covenant

You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you . . . But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant (Genesis 17:11,14).

The sign of the Old Testament was circumcision. Under the Old Covenant a man would surrender a part of his manhood, symbolic of the destruction of his pride and what was important to him. The New Covenant cuts deeper, and baptism, the sign of the New Covenant, represents greater surrender. The New Covenant requires the surrender of all. Baptism illustrates the believer's death, then resurrection. Being lowered beneath the water represents dying to the old life; being raised represents the new life.

Baptism is one of the two signs or sacramental acts which are clearly commanded by Christ as a confirmation of our covenant. "Sacrament" is a Latin term for an oath of allegiance and is often explained as a visual sign or symbol of the impartation of a spiritual grace. A person who is baptized is taking an oath sealing his covenant with Christ.

Baptism, within the covenant, is roughly equivalent to signing a contract. The promise is there whether you sign or not, but until you sign the agreement, you will receive none of the promises!

Baptism is taking an oath that you have given Christ full permission to destroy your old nature so that He can give you a new life. Romans 6:3 says, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?" You are giving Christ permission to destroy your old nature by whatever means necessary.

Optimally, you will be sensitive to His guidance and allow your old nature to be destroyed quietly and easily. This becomes pleasant, for you and for God. Realistically, however, you will often rebel and fight. In those times, you will need to remember Paul's words to the Hebrew church, "Do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son

whom He receives (Hebrews 12:5-6).” God will be as gentle as He can but as forceful as necessary.

The power of the oath remains. Whether you desire it or not! Even if you later decide you want to go back to the old life, you have already authorized the destruction of that nature. This is why the Apostle says, “If after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first (2 Peter 2:20).”

But for those who press on, there is abundance of glory. Their promise will come, incontrovertibly and absolutely! You will be brought into glory and into Christ’s nature. The early church’s usual form of baptism, assuming that a pool, baptismal, or small enough river was available, was to bring the new believer into the water from one side then bring him out on the other side, where, in exchange for his old clothes, he would receive garments of white representing the power, life, and nature of Christ that now covered him. Galatians 3:27 says that “all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

There is no longer anything behind you except for the annihilation of an old nature. There is nothing to turn back to. Lot’s wife turned back while Sodom and Gomorrah were being destroyed, and she was turned into a pillar of salt! Had she lived, there would have been nothing left for her anyway.

There is only one direction – forward!