



# Church of God Ministries

Spanish Fort, Alabama

November 27, 2020

## **Baptism Brings Rejoicing and Celebration!**

Warm hellos to you dear brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from our offices here in Spanish Fort, AL.

My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week has been blessed. We've had family in visiting for the week, and I am ever so grateful.

Two weeks ago we discussed "What Moved You to Seek Baptism?" We continued our discussion about baptism last Friday evening, and we'll do so again this Friday as we come to God's Sabbath.

What a privilege and blessing it is to be singled out by the Great God to enter into a special relationship with Him as a child of His in the spiritual realm. What a loving Father we have in that He has provided a way for us to be forgiven of our sins, and have access to Him and His Holy Spirit.

During the ceremony of baptism we take part in a symbolic death. You and I all have earned the death penalty because we all have sinned. (Romans 3:23) Jesus left the God realm and became a flesh and blood human being for the purpose of shedding His blood and undergoing a sacrificial death. The apostle Paul eloquently explains this in Romans 6, (often referred to as the baptism chapter). Paul states, "*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?*" (Romans 6:3) "*knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*" (Romans 6:6) Obviously none of us has been literally crucified and we have not literally died during the baptism ceremony! But, we are to be committed to leave the old way of life behind and walk in a new way having been cleansed of sin and empowered with and by God's Spirit. The symbolism is profound.

Through baptism and the laying on of hands that accompanies it, we express faith in receiving Gods' Holy Spirit now while still human, and also express faith in our future resurrection when we will receive spirit bodies in Gods' family and kingdom. "*Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, 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. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection*" (Romans 6:4-5). We will have a body like that of the resurrected Jesus. We shall be like Him! "*And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.*" (1 Corinthians

15:49) *"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."* (1 John 3:2) These verses give us hope, even though we honestly do not understand exactly what we will be like. You and I see through a glass darkly or have an obscure or imperfect vision of what will be reality.

Baptism is a ceremony to experience with rejoicing and celebration! God and the heavenly realm rejoice when a sinner repents. *"I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents . . ."* (Luke 15:7) One would assume the joy increases when the sinner is baptized and receives the Holy Spirit! I know when my granddaughter was born we rejoiced! When a human family is blessed with a new child it is a special time to rejoice and celebrate. When one becomes a spirit begotten child of God, indeed that is worth rejoicing over!

In one of our monthly in home Bible Studies we talked in depth about how John the Baptist came preaching a message of repentance accompanied by water baptism. (Matthew 3:1-6) John did the baptizing "in the Jordan River" not just at it. Baptism involves immersion in the water, not pouring, sprinkling, or spraying water on the one being baptized.

John prepared the way for Christ (v.3) and announced an addition Jesus would make to just baptism in water. *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."* (v.11) Jesus spoke several times of this coming of the Holy Spirit as He taught His disciples. *"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."* (Luke 24:49) *"for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."* (Acts 1:5) [See also John 14:16-17, 26 and John 15:26 and John 16:7, 13.] This began to be fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost described in Acts 2 when the coming of the Holy Spirit was manifested with visible tongues of fire.

The apostle Paul does not specifically refer to the laying on of hands for receiving the Holy Spirit in Romans 6, but it is definitely implied. Obviously Paul himself practiced laying on of hands and taught it as a basic teaching. *"And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied."* (Acts 19:6) *"...the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands . . ."* (Hebrews 6:1-2)

Through the empowering and opening our minds to the truth by God's Spirit, as Paul stated, *"even so we also should walk in newness of life."* (Romans 6:4) We are to grow in and manifest the fruit of God's Spirit residing within our minds. *"But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life."*

(Romans 6:22) [See also Galatians 5:22-23]. Paul also instructs the one being baptized to "*present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*" (Romans 6:13) We are declared righteous through faith in Christ's shed blood and sacrificial death. We are expected to practice righteousness. Keeping God's commandments is associated with doing righteousness. (Deuteronomy 6:25; Psalm 119:172; Isaiah 48:18)

As a side-note, many of you correspond regularly to let me know "you appreciate God's Word, chapters and verses in my weekly letters". Some use these letters to study more deeply into topics. So, yes, we'll keep looking in the Scriptures to keep us anchored.

Some individuals put off baptism and worry that once they are baptized, they are held more accountable and if they fall short and sin they are going to fail in their calling. Various parables and teachings tell us to move forward, and not put off responding to God's calling, including seeking baptism. (Luke 14:16-24) Jesus made an important statement. "*But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."*" (Luke 9:62) Once one has been called and has had one's mind opened up by the working of God's Spirit, the logical course of action is to proceed forward. One needs to seek the Kingdom of God and be baptized, and then receive the Holy Spirit. When that Spirit unites with our human spirit we become a child of God in a unique special way. One who is baptized continues to be a work in progress. He or she is still human and at times stumbles and falls. It's a continuing process.

One of the most encouraging comments is made by the apostle John. "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" (1 John 1:8-9) Our Heavenly Father wants us to make it into His Kingdom! He willingly forgives those who humbly repent and seek forgiveness and then make effort to overcome any sins, whether done before or after baptism.

Baptism is an important step and statement in seeking that kingdom. I encourage us all to "*be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure.*" (2 Peter 1:10) For some of us, that may include proceeding with baptism counseling. I encourage you to not put it off indefinitely. If you'd like, we can even begin remote sessions via Web Conference and then continue when I make visits in person in some cases. Our heavenly Father will rejoice over your understanding repentance more deeply and seeking to take that step towards and of baptism...

What an incredible opportunity to become a child of God...baptism begins a lifelong walk in "the Way" toward His Kingdom.

As I like to close with each Friday, arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

**-Scott Hoefker**

*(Pastor, Church of God Ministries)*

Scott Hoefker, Pastor

Church of God Ministries

*(Ministerios de la Iglesia de Dios )*

tshoefker@cogministries.org

[www.cogministries.org](http://www.cogministries.org)

P.O. Box 7783

Spanish Fort, AL 36577

251-930-1797 Offices /402-250-2389 Cell