

Hope Channel presents

DISCOVERIES '08

By Mark Finley

18

How to Bury the Past and Experience Life at Its Best

We live in exciting times. Recent years have brought the triumph of democracy in unexpected places. The Berlin Wall crumbled before our very eyes. The Soviet Union and puppet Communist regimes washed away before a miraculous bloodless revolution, ushering in a new era. But most observers fail to see the spiritual dimension in these revolutions against tyranny. It's much more than just a change of political systems. Where tyranny once reigned supreme, God is bringing religious liberty.

We may have forgotten just how deeply God is committed to freedom. He's in the business of freeing people from all kinds of oppression. The Almighty, the Victorious Warrior who rescues the prey from the tyrant, stands in opposition to the empire of Satan in all its forms. Satan seeks to enslave men by any means: vice, deprivation, ignorance, political oppression. God's way and Satan's way are at war: the Lamb of God *vs.* the Red Dragon, the pure woman *vs.* the harlot of Babylon, a battle of love *vs.* force.

God's victory is inevitable, for Christ made the total, all-out commitment for us on the cross. Jesus made the supreme commitment for us and invites us to make the supreme commitment to Him. Each of us must deal with tyranny in our own life. Satan seeks to enslave us in his oppressive kingdom. **Revelation 12:17** depicts the church as a pure woman and Satan as a dragon who attacks God's people: "The dragon was ENRAGED with the woman, and he went to MAKE WAR with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." **1 Peter 5:8-9** describes our enemy in a similar way: "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a ROARING LION looking for someone to devour."

Satan is earth's ultimate tyrant, and we'll remain trapped in his tyrannical empire UNLESS we take a firm stand. Why? Think about it. No one is untouched by the oppression of sin. We struggle with habits and attitudes we know are wrong. We fail to live up to our own standards. We bear scars from the sins of *others*—and we *cause* scars ourselves. All of us suffer from the tyranny of evil unleashed in this world. So how do we escape and find freedom? It's not enough just to wish this tyranny away. We must take a stand, declare another allegiance. And that allegiance must be to the One who sets us free, Jesus Christ.

Revelation 7:14-15 shows people who have declared such an allegiance, a group that has gone through history's last upheavals and made it to the very throne room of God. This text describes the secret of their strength: "These are the ones who came out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in the temple." They've washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! Did you know that a particular Christian practice symbolizes this washing, making things white in the blood of the Lamb, that there's actually a way we can affirm that publicly in our lives? Let's talk about this affirmation, this public statement, and the difference it can make. It's the statement of BAPTISM.

Baptism is mentioned more than 80 times in the New Testament alone. **Matthew 28:19-20** records Jesus' *final instructions* to His disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, BAPTIZING them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, TEACHING them to observe ALL things I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

The MEANING of Baptism: Bible baptism is a public commitment, a symbol of allegiance to Christ, declaring whose side we're on. To be "washed in the Blood of the Lamb" is to make a public statement of loyalty to Him in baptism. No doubt about it: Jesus is the One standing against the evil empire of Satan, the One able to deliver us from the tyrant's grip. So we must give absolute allegiance to Christ as our Savior. But many today give only a vague assent to Jesus as Savior and keep their allegiance a private affair. Sure, they believe in Him, but for some reason that belief never becomes a public statement. Yet we need something definite in our lives. We need to take a firm stand. Private allegiances tend to wither away. Unexpressed beliefs tend to bend with the circumstances. So how do we take a stand? The early Christians show us how very clearly. After one of Peter's first sermons, his listeners were deeply convicted about the claims of Christ. They asked, "What shall we do?" Peter answered in **Acts 2:38**: "Repent and be BAPTIZED, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ." These people had faith in Jesus as the Messiah, as Savior. They took a stand and made a public statement by being baptized. Baptism is a way of identifying ourselves with Christ—we join ourselves to Him publicly, just as a man and woman join themselves in marriage through a wedding ceremony.

The METHOD of Baptism: Look at how Jesus was baptized—He's a safe example to follow. **Mark 1:9-10**: "Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, COMING UP FROM the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove." Jesus was FULLY IMMERSSED by John in the Jordan River. **John 3:23** states: "John was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was MUCH WATER there. And they came and were baptized." True biblical baptism requires deep water. Sprinkling doesn't, neither does pouring. Only immersion demands "much water." Paul tells us in **Ephesians 4:5**: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism" There's only ONE genuine faith—saving faith in Christ. There's only one Lord—Jesus our Lord and Savior. And there's only one genuine method of baptism—by immersion. In **Acts 8:38** the Apostle Philip baptized an Ethiopian eunuch: "Both Philip and the eunuch WENT DOWN into the water, and he baptized him." Philip placed the new believer completely under water. Full immersion is the only method of baptism described in the Bible.

The SYMBOLISM of Baptism: The Bible method of baptism richly symbolizes Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Paul asks in **Romans 6:3-6**: "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. . . ." Thus baptism really represents *three things*: (1) Dying to the old sinful way of life. (2) Burying our sins in the watery grave. (3) RISING AGAIN out of the water to walk a NEW LIFE.

The IMPORTANCE of Baptism: Let me make one thing clear. Baptism does not save us—it's not a magic ceremony that gives eternal life. Faith in Christ is what saves us; we receive eternal life only by believing in Him and accepting Him as Savior. And baptism doesn't mean we're *perfect*—it means we're *committed*. But some Scripture passages speak of the supreme importance of Bible baptism. In **Mark 16:16** Jesus Himself said: "He who believes and is BAPTIZED shall be saved." According to Jesus, baptism is essential for salvation. In **John 3:5**, Jesus emphatically declared: "Unless one is born of WATER and the Spirit, he CANNOT enter the kingdom of God." If a sincere believer, like the thief on the cross, cannot be baptized, then Christ's own baptism will serve in that case. But when we're given the wonderful opportunity presented by baptism, it would be an insult to scorn it and turn away. God's call is urgent in **Acts 22:16, NIV**: "What are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His name."

THE BIBLE SAYS

- Matthew 28:19-20** “Go ye therefore, and TEACH all nations, BAPTIZING them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”
- Mark 16:16** “He who believes AND IS BAPTIZED shall be saved.”
- John 3:5** “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
- Ephesians 4:5** There is “one Lord, one faith, ONE baptism”—*not* many different correct modes.
- Matthew 3:13-17** Jesus was baptized by IMMERSION as an instructed adult in the River Jordan.
- John 3:23** Biblical baptism of adults—that is, by immersion—takes “MUCH water.”
- Mark 1:9-10** Jesus was baptized by John “IN” the River Jordan and came “up OUT OF the water.” He was fully immersed.
- Acts 8:38** “Both Philip and the eunuch went DOWN INTO the water.” Philip baptized him by the Biblical mode of IMMERSION.
- Colossians 2:12** The symbol is “BURIED [in a watery grave] with Christ in baptism.”
- Romans 6:3-6** Baptism—a beautiful symbol of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection—represents our *death* to sin, the *burial* of our old life, and emergence to *new* life in Jesus. But this is true only when executed by IMMERSION, *not* sprinkling or pouring.
- Acts 2:38** Sincere REPENTANCE should precede baptism.
- Mark 16:16** Whoever BELIEVES and is baptized shall be saved.
- Acts 2:41-42** “Those who gladly received His word were baptized. . . . They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ DOCTRINE”—TEACHING. (See also Matthew 28:19-20.)
- 1 Cor. 12:13, 27** Baptism is into the “BODY” of Christ, the CHURCH. (See also Acts 2:46-47.)
- Matthew 28:19-20** Jesus gave authority to baptize only to His disciples teaching “all” of His commands. As the Holy Spirit impresses you to be baptized, seek a Sabbath-keeping church teaching ALL that Jesus has commanded.
- Acts 22:16** “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.”

Quick Quiz

Our heavenly Father has *so much* He longs to teach us! Think of each seminar session as one in a series of steps leading upward—a series of “lessons from heaven.” May we learn our lessons well, so we in turn can teach others. God’s Word, the Bible—our Textbook for this seminar—offers **Learning Unlimited!**

#18 - How to Bury the Past and Experience Life at Its Best

1. To those who wonder whether baptism is important or even necessary, the Master declares: “Unless one is born of _____ and the Spirit, he _____ enter the kingdom of God.”

To check your answer, see John 3:5.

2. Christians know it’s vital to our salvation to BELIEVE in Christ, but Jesus Himself adds a *second* vital requirement when He says, “He that believeth and is _____ shall be saved.”

To check your answer, see Mark 16:16.

3. When people would come to John the Baptist from all surrounding regions, he baptized them “IN” the Jordan River, at a place called “Aenon near to Salim, because there was _____ there.”

To check your answer, see Matthew 3:5-6 and John 3:23.

4. T It’s really not possible to choose between being baptized “into Christ” and being baptized
 F “into the church,” since Christ is the Head of the “body” we call the church.

To check your answer, see Colossians 1:18 and Ephesians 1:22-23.

5. Man’s unsanctified mind has departed from the Bible and devised MANY methods of performing the ritual of baptism—such as sprinkling, pouring, and anointing the forehead with a drop of water! But the Word of God speaks of only “ _____ Lord, _____ faith, _____ baptism.”

To check your answer, see Ephesians 4:5.

6. Essential steps that should precede baptism include which of the following:

- A. Repentance—feeling godly sorrow for one’s sins.
- B. Belief—having faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
- C. Teaching—instruction in the truths of the Bible.
- D. Giving—making a donation to the church.
- E. All of the above.

Note: Infants cannot do *any* of these!

To check your answer, see Acts 2:38, Acts 8:37, and Matthew 28:19-20.

A Thought for Today

Romans 6: 3-5

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 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, ...