

BAPTISM INTO CHRIST PART I

Peter Hay, prepared for the Presbytery fellowship word, 13 March 2022

Transcription of recording, slightly edited

Introduction

In our last session, we considered 'the germination of the Seed of the Father', which is the Spirit of Christ within our heart, as a hearer moves from wayside ground, which is the prevenient phase of salvation, to new birth.

Specifically, we considered three points from our overview of the steps of salvation.

We looked at point 11, which is 'the germination of the Seed'; point 12, which is 'the believer begins to cry out "Abba, Father" '; and point 13, 'our body has become a temple of the Holy Spirit'.

In our study today, we will consider the subject of baptism, which we will cover in at least two sessions, and possibly a third.

The motivation for baptism

We will start by looking at *the motivation for baptism*.

A person who has been born as a son of God, by receiving the Holy Spirit, will request baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is important to note that the desire for baptism will be motivated in the one who has been *born*; and I will explain why that is the case.

The first point to understand about this is that it is not a formula. So we are not talking here about the 'right' words to use. Nor does baptism simply identify a person as belonging to a particular church denomination.

That is not what the Scriptures describe or communicate as the implication of baptism.

Christ abides in a believer's heart

Christ now *abides* in a person's heart.

Remember, He 'comes into' a person's heart in the adoption. But then, through germination, Christ begins to *dwell* in the person's heart.

Because He is abiding, or dwelling, in the person's heart, they will desire to *abide in Him*. The viability of their sonship depends on this *connection*.

A person is born of the Father by Christ the Seed germinating in a person's heart by the Holy Spirit - remember, it is the Spirit who gives life.

However, the viability of a person's sonship depends on them then abiding in Christ.

In this regard, Jesus said, 'Abide in Me, and I in you.' He continues to abide in a person - a newborn son of God - *if they abide in Him*.

You can see that, if a person has been born of God, they will desire to be connected to Christ, and to abide in Him.

'Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.' Joh 15:4.

Even though the Seed has germinated, and a person has been born as a son, they cannot grow to fruitfulness and bear fruit unless they abide in Christ, or abide in the Vine as a branch.

The Holy Spirit urges us to abide in Christ

When Jesus said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit', and we receive the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, He is the One who *enables* the germination of the Seed.

When He comes and dwells in our heart, He is the One who actually urges the son of God to come into Christ, to be joined to the fellowship of Christ's body. Remember, He also bears witness that we are a son.

Paul said, 'For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.' 1Co 12:13-14.

The Spirit, who is the One who *enables* us with Eternal Spirit, is the One inside us. He not only brings us to birth, but He also *urges* us to abide in Christ, as a member of His body.

Through baptism into Christ, a son of God has access, by one Spirit, to the Father. And the Father places every individual in the body as He so desires, or as He pleases.

This context, where the Father places us in the body, which is the church, becomes *the relational context for our life*.

So, you are born of God; but the viability of that sonship depends on abiding in Christ.

The body of Christ is our relational context for sonship growth

The Holy Spirit urges us to come into the body of Christ. And He is the One by whom we are being baptised, not only by one Spirit, but He is also the One who *brings us to the Father*.

The Father says, 'You belong here, in the body.' So, the body, or this context where the Father places us, becomes the relational context for our life, and for our commitment to live by one Spirit as a son of God who is being led by the Spirit.

For a person who is committed to live by the Spirit in this context, this will be the ongoing reality of their baptism, which will therefore have a *relational implication* on where the Father has placed them.

If we reject that, then our baptism was merely a sacramental exercise of 'getting wet'.

The outcome of baptism is a tangible and practical way of living. And it is a context for life for us.

Our faith, or the confession of this reality, is that we are committed to live and to die in this relational sphere of the Father's appointment.

'But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.' 1Co 12:18.

Sonship life can be lost if we do not take up the cross

Through baptism, a son of God is joined to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus Himself taught that, unless a son of God joins this process, or this reality, they will die again. By this, He meant that they would lose their sonship.

'And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.' Mat 10:38.

He was referring here to His offering journey by which He has been brought back from the death of sin to become the Firstborn from the dead.

He was saying that, unless you take up the cross and join that death, burial and resurrection, you are not worthy of Him.

He continued, 'He who finds his life will lose it.' A person may be born of God, but *not connect to the fellowship* of that dying and living. And, if that is the case, what they found will be lost.

'He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake [or in fellowship with Me] will find it.' Mat 10:39.

This is a key point. No-one's sonship will endure *unless* it is joined to that process.

Baptism is our fellowship in His dying and living

The implication of being joined to the body of Christ, where you are abiding, is your daily participation in the fellowship of His death, burial and resurrection.

Although Christ has come into a believer, *they* must *come into Christ* in order to live as a new creation. This is an important point.

'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.' 2Co 5:17.

Those words, '*he is*', are not actually in the text. It is 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, a new creation.'

The expression of your new creation sonship life depends upon your connection to His body. And, remember, Paul said that it is not one member, but many. He was making the point that it is a *relational* context.

'Old things have passed away'. That is in *the fellowship of His dying*.

'Behold, all things have become new.' That is in *the fellowship of His resurrection*.

He was obviously referring to baptism.

Our sonship life is hidden with Christ in God

Addressing this implication of baptism, Paul explained that, through baptism, our sonship life from the Father, which becomes ours through birth, is 'hidden with Christ in God'.

This is an amazing principle, and it relieves us of a lot of unnecessary anxiety, which is really the outcome of the fear of death.

'For you died, and your life [the word '*life*' is '*zoe*', and the Greek word '*zoe*' is most often speaking about the life that is unique to God the Father, which is in the Son, and becomes the life of a son of God] and your [sonship *zoe*, or sonship] life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life [our *zoe*, our sonship] appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.' Col 3:4-4.

By this, Paul meant that the believer's new creation identity died with Christ when they were baptised with or into Christ.

This is an amazing principle! You would think that it would be our dead, sinful life that dies with Christ, but that is not the case at all.

A person is *already* dead in trespasses and sins *before baptism*. And, having been joined to His body in Gethsemane, through Christ's offering on the cross, they are *made alive* through regeneration and new birth.

They are made alive from the death of sin through regeneration and new birth. And they are now dying *with Christ*; not as one who is already dead in sin.

They are now dying with Christ as a new creation who is hidden with Christ in God. They now die in the fellowship of Christ's death and resurrection, as a member of His body.

Do you see the point? *Everyone is dying*.

You are either *dying under the death of sin*, as a slave of sin; or you are being made alive from that, delivered from slavery to sin, to now *die with Christ* in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings as a member of His body.

By that means, you are being delivered from the other law within you, and His life is becoming your life as an eternal possession.

Conformed to His death, burial and resurrection

You cannot endure as a son unless you are conformed to His death, burial and resurrection as a member of His body.

Jesus said this to His disciples. He made the point that He was going to go on a journey. He was talking about His offering, and He said to them that they would not be able to journey with Him until they were 'born again'.

Do you see that it is not suffering, in itself, that does it; where a person obtains an inheritance just because they suffer?

It is the fact that a person who is born of God, and then conformed to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, is obtaining the inheritance.

This is what Jesus said to the disciples at the last supper.

'Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews,

"Where I am going, you cannot come," so now I say it to you.' Joh 13:33.

'Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward". ' Joh 13:36.

This is beautiful point. He was saying to Peter, 'I am making this offering journey, and I am going to finish this complete work. The outcome is that I am going to ascend to My Father and to your Father, and then I am going to send the Holy Spirit to you.

'And, then, because you are born, you will journey this same journey. But it is going to be *with Me* and, because of that, you are going to obtain what I have already finished for you.'

As Paul said, 'He has forever perfected those who are being sanctified.' Heb 10:14.

Only a son of God can be sanctified. They are being delivered from what is not true, and are being established in their sonship.

Our salvation is assured because of His completed work

So, when a son of God is baptised into Christ, it is their *zoe* life from the Father, which belongs to their name as a son of God, that is hidden with Christ in God.

This is an important point. It is not that they lose their sonship or that their name somehow 'goes missing'.

It is that it is completely secure in Christ, in God; or with Christ, in God. They are assured of salvation because Christ has already perfected and fulfilled their sonship through His offering on the cross.

As they continue to live as a member of Christ's body, they will progressively obtain the sonship that He finished for them through His offering. And then they will appear with Him at His second coming. They will appear in glory.

What He has finished progressively becomes ours

He has made the journey, and He has *finished* it.

When you are born, and then baptised into the fellowship of that offering, what He has finished for you is *progressively becoming yours*, as the full

revelation of your sonship, by which you are glorifying the Father.

In this regard, Paul said to the Colossians, 'For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life [the One who has finished our sonship] appears, then you will also appear with Him in glory.' Col 3:3-4.

Everything that He has finished, as you are journeying with Him, will become apparent or will be revealed in your life.

That is exactly the same thing that John said in his first letter.

'Beloved, now we are children [sons] of God [we are born of God]; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be.'

We do not have the full measure of our sonship; we received it in a 'seed' measure, and it has to *abide* in Christ and grow up. There is a process involved here.

'But we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' 1Jn 3:2.

A son of God needs to be illuminated to, and to accept, this great truth that their life is hidden with Christ in God; that it is already a finished work; that their sonship is already known; that their name is already assured; that their works have already been completed; and that He is priesting to them a daily participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings so that they might obtain what He has finished for them.

The constant need for affirmation shows that our life is not hidden in Christ

When a person has been illuminated to that, they will resign from their preoccupation with the expression of their own sonship.

If you understand that your name and life as a son of God are hidden with Christ in God, you will not be preoccupied with revealing yourself, because it is *hidden!*

What is it like for a person who has not been illuminated to this reality? Such a person will be constantly anxious and driven in relation to their own name. Their name should be hidden with Christ in God, but they are completely preoccupied with knowing it, and revealing it.

This preoccupation is characterised by the incessant *need for affirmation from others.*

In their relational context, the certainty of their sonship and the expression of their name are being found only by people affirming them, by saying, 'Yes, you must be that'; 'Yes, you're doing really well'. Their confidence as a son of God is found in that affirmation.

In that case, do you see that they are not hidden with Christ in God? They are trying to find themselves through the communication and expression of others toward them.

Seeking empowerment by association or by appointment

It may be characterised by the incessant need for affirmation from others; or it may be characterised by *seeking empowerment.*

'Empowerment' simply means some imprimatur, or push, or something added to you, which you find through either a position, particularly in the church, or by association or connection with someone who has grace.

This is empowerment *by association* or empowerment *by appointment.*

As a result, a person's sonship expression is *not* found in the fellowship of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Their confidence as a son is found because they have a title or role appointed to them; or because they are connected with someone whom they view as being settled in the Lord.

It is not confidence because sonship is being obtained; it is confidence because of association.

A name not hidden with Christ in God

A third way that a person demonstrates their preoccupation with their own sonship or the expression of their own sonship, is the persistent enquiry, 'Who am I, and what is my name?'

If someone is driven by that, and is literally asking that, it is obviously an indicator that they don't know, or they are not assured of, their sonship. They are not settled that it is hidden with Christ in God.

On one hand, there are some who are constantly trying to draw from others, and from their circumstances, to find some sense of assurance of their sonship and name.

However, on the other hand, the self-confident assertion of one's name and expression, within a faith community or a church, is also contrary to the

illumination of a believer whose life is hidden with Christ in God.

On the one hand, some don't know their name, and are looking for it from others; while, on the other hand, someone who is completely assured and has defined what their name is, does not know it, either.

Immediately, that is different from what John said. 'Beloved, now we are the sons of God, but it has not yet been revealed what we shall be.'

Anyone who asserts that they are completely confident and that they know their name, doesn't recognise that we are to *grow up* into it, and that the apprehension of our name is actually *found in fellowship*.

This carnal expression may be characterised by a person who claims to have a clear understanding of their name, which they hold independently of fellowship.

Now, I am not saying that we shouldn't know our name. I'm saying that we *cannot* know it *apart from fellowship*.

If they expect that their self-definition should be acknowledged within a fellowship, the evidence of this demeanour or this expectation is that they become offended when they are not affirmed or accommodated, particularly by the presbytery.

If a person has a view of their name and expression as a son in the church, and it is not being verified or validated, particularly by those who are called to oversee or shepherd the church, they may become offended.

In this regard, they may question the validity of the presbytery. They say, 'Well, you must not be the presbytery, because you don't see the truth of my name.'

They set themselves as being the reference point of what is true, and do not accept that fellowship is where 'the ground of truth' is found and established.

They question the validity of a presbytery as a messenger administration on the basis of how their name is received by the presbytery.

That is obviously someone who is *not* illuminated to the fact that they have died and their life is hidden with Christ in God. They do not see the process by which they are to grow up and obtain

everything that Christ has finished for them, according to the will of God.

Illumination regarding progressively growing up into our sonship, revealing Christ

So, what about a person 'who is being illuminated' to that? And that should be all of us, shouldn't it?

A person who knows that their life has been 'hidden with Christ, in God' is not focused on themselves, at all. If you are hidden with Christ, in God, you are not preoccupied with yourself and your own expression.

What are you preoccupied with? Our preoccupation is with *revealing Christ*, through offering, by faith.

Baptism - being rooted and grounded in love

And this is the evidence of a person who is becoming 'rooted and grounded in love'. They have received the Seed, Christ, and the Holy Spirit has caused it to germinate.

What does 'germination' mean? It means that the seed is beginning to 'form roots'.

The first implication of baptism is that a person begins to be 'rooted and grounded in love'.

Two aspects of being rooted and grounded in love

There are two characteristics of a person who is rooted and grounded in love.

One is that they are *connected to a relational context* - because there cannot be love without there being someone to demonstrate love to, or to give love to.

The second aspect is having *the capacity to lay down one's life to reveal another*.

The point is that being rooted and grounded in love does not mean that you merely have lots of friends. It does not mean that you have a broad social reality.

Rooted and grounded in love is being rooted and grounded *where the Father has placed you*.

And it means being established in the *capacity* for *agape* love. That is love that is revealed by laying down one's life.

The capacity to lay down life to reveal Christ in others

Being rooted and grounded in love does not mean having lots of relationships - although we do have plenty of friends and connections in the body of

Christ. It means that a person who is rooted and grounded in love is rooted and grounded in the capacity to *lay down their life* to reveal another person.

That person is not preoccupied with their own name. They are preoccupied with *revealing Christ in another*.

The *works* through which Christ is revealed by the members of His body are *according to the will of the Father*. And they are the works that belong to the sonship of each member in particular.

You, being a son, reveals Christ. And your preoccupation is to reveal Christ, as a member of His body. As you do that, you are fulfilling the works of your sonship.

The evidence of receiving our sonship

The point is that you are not motivated by trying to find your sonship; you are motivated to 'reveal another', which is being rooted and grounded in love.

However, in doing that, you are *receiving your sonship*. How do we know this in practical terms? This is evident in a person who is *hearing the proceeding word*.

Why is that important? It is because 'faith comes by hearing'. And *faith* is necessary for this offering participation.

Sonship is obtained by hearing the proceeding word, and then by presenting oneself to serve, where the opportunity arises. It is to care for others in the body when this need becomes apparent.

A son is hearing the word, and is motivated to participate. Their focus is on revealing another. And there will be contexts, or opportunities, for service in the body. There will also be, in day to day activities, opportunities to care for the needs of the brethren in Christ.

Each is equally valid and necessary to this principle of being rooted and grounded in love.

In other words, they lay down their lives to reveal their brethren in the body of Christ. And, through offering, on the ground of fellowship, they are proving the will of God, which is the sanctification that belongs to their name and works as a son of God.

Acceptance of, and commitment to, the relational context in which the Father has placed us

A foundational implication of baptism is the acceptance of, and commitment to, the relational context in which the Father has placed a person.

I have said that a couple of times; but it is a most essential understanding to obtain, in association with baptism.

In our discussions about baptism, we may previously have thought about the different formulas that can be used; how far under the water we need to be submerged; or whether we should be sprinkled. That is not the main understanding of baptism.

The main understanding of baptism is how we then *walk in that as a foundation*.

And one of those aspects is to accept and participate in the relational context in which the Father places us.

This understanding is actually essential to our citizenship of the heavenly Jerusalem.

At Easter we will speak more about the relationship between 'entry into the heavenly city', and 'access to the tree of life', which feeds us for our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering.

Relational connection to the fellowship of the presbytery, which is the fellowship of the Father and the Son

Commitment to, and acceptance of, the relational context in which the Father has placed a person was picked up by the apostle John. We will read this in the context of *baptism*.

'That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.' 1Jn 1:3-4.

'Joy being full' is the joy that marks *germination coming to fullness*, because you are coming to the fullness of your sonship. That is what he meant by 'your joy may be full'.

He was saying that that process by which the germinated son of God comes to full maturity

requires *connection to the fellowship of the presbytery*, which is the fellowship of the Father and the Son.

Now, we *are* connected with Christ and the Father. Remember, we are to 'abide in Christ'.

And the Spirit is *bringing us to the Father*, who is setting us in the body as He desires.

We are connected to the Son and the Father when we are connected to a presbytery that is raised and seated with Christ. And our joy will be full because we are joined to the fellowship of the Father and the Son.

And we are joined to the fellowship of the Father and the Son by being joined to a presbytery fellowship, to which we are joined by 'hearing and receiving' their word. And that is 'raised and seated with Christ'.

So we're connected with Christ and the Father when we are connected to a presbytery that is raised and seated with Christ.

And we remember that Jesus said to the presbytery of the church in Ephesus, 'I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works.'

Remember, we are to be rooted and grounded in love as those who are hidden with Christ in God.

Fallen from heavenly places; from first love

But the Ephesian church had fallen from 'first love'. They had fallen from that *fellowship of love*, in which we are supposed to be rooted and grounded in order to *bear fruit*.

The point is that Jesus said to them that they had to understand how far they had fallen; where they had fallen from.

So the *aggelos* presbytery of the church in Ephesus was a star that had fallen from the right hand of Christ.

In the first chapter of the book of Revelation, we read that the mystery of the seven stars are the seven angels, or *aggelos* presbyteries, that belong to the seven churches. So, when Jesus said to the presbytery in Ephesus, 'Look how far you have fallen', He was saying, 'You are a star that has fallen from My hand.'

So, where is Jesus seated? He is raised and seated in heavenly places at the right hand of the Father.

The Ephesian presbytery fellowship had fallen from there. The *aggelos* presbytery of the church in Ephesus was a star that had fallen from the right hand of Christ. They had fallen from a great height, because Christ has been seated by the Father in heavenly places, far above all principality, power, might and dominion.

That is 'heavenly places'.

The fellowship of the Ephesian presbytery, which was the fellowship of the Ephesian church, had fallen from heavenly places. It was a 'form of godliness' that came to have 'no power to it'.

Highlighting the point that Jesus is in heavenly places, we read, 'The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He [the Father] worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.' Eph 1:18-21.

Every name is with Him; raised far above - every name! And the Father has raised Him up.

Significantly, by falling from His hand, the Ephesian presbytery had fallen from where they had been raised and seated together with Christ in heavenly places.

In baptism, we are raised and seated in heavenly places

The point is that, when you are baptised, you are raised, with Christ - there, in heavenly places.

In Ephesians Chapter 1, Paul established that that is where Christ is - 'raised from the dead, seated at His right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power, that every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come'.

Then, in Chapter 2, he said, 'But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses [and sins], made us *alive together with Christ* (by grace you have been saved).'

That is prevenient grace, leading to *birth*. And then, as one who has been born, *baptised into Christ*.

So we are baptised into His death, burial and resurrection, by which we are 'raised up together'. 'And has made us to sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.'

Presbyters being restored to the right hand of God, establishing the fellowship of the Father and the Son

Now, as presbyters 'repent and do the first works in obedience to Christ's command', they are *restored to His right hand*, where He is enthroned at the right hand of the Father. So Jesus is there.

The Ephesian presbytery had fallen from there, because that was where He had placed them. And they were, in repentance, being restored to that.

Presbyters who are restored to the right hand of Christ *establish* the fellowship of the presbytery so that those who receive their message can join the fellowship of the Father and His Son.

Another way of saying it is: unless a presbytery is restored to the right hand of Christ, they do not have the message to proclaim, that connects a person to that fellowship.

This is a very important point, isn't it? This has an implication for the recovery of presbyteries; but also for our connection to them so that we are connected to this 'raised and seated' reality.

This point, then, informs our understanding of baptism.

Being joined to the fellowship that is raised with Christ

As I have said, baptism is not 'a sacrament'.

When a person is baptised by the elders, they are being *joined to the fellowship of the presbytery* which is in the right hand of Christ, who is seated in heavenly places.

This is the implication of being 'raised together with Christ', through baptism. Hence, a person is not raised with Christ if they remain disconnected from the fellowship of the presbytery.

Remember that you 'died with Christ through baptism', and you have been 'raised with Him'.

However, that is not a reality for a person *unless* they are joined to the fellowship that is raised with Christ.

The point is that fellowship is *in Christ's hand*, and in being *raised with Him*.

If you have a disconnection or an unresolved breach in fellowship with the presbytery who are in His hand, it doesn't matter how many times you 'get dunked', you are not raised and seated with Christ - because Christ has this fellowship *in His hand!*

And if you want to be joined to the fellowship of the Father and His Son, you have to be joined to the fellowship of the presbytery from which the word comes, that joins us to that ground.

Fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ

Now, by asking for baptism, a believer acknowledges the necessity for their fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ.

In this regard, Paul said, 'As many of us as were baptised into Christ were baptised 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 should *walk in newness of life*.' Rom 6:3-4.

I will leave it there for the moment. In our next session, we will consider the implication of being baptised into the death and resurrection of Christ's offering, as our daily participation.

And we will explain how that is necessary for us to come to maturity as sons of God.